

Sharon Stone marries newspaper editor

BEVERLY HILLS — Actress Sharon Stone married to a San Francisco newspaper editor on Monday.

St. Valentine turns Olympic village into love shack

NAGANO (AP) — Love shack athletes housed in the Olympic village in Nagano, Japan, was transformed into a love shack.

Divorces not allowed on Valentine's

BANGKOK (AP) — Young Thai couples waiting outside marriage registration offices on Monday to get divorced.

Heartsick Italian ex-con arrested on Valentine's Day

ROME (AP) — A heart-sick Italian ex-convict wanted to go to London to see a girlfriend on Valentine's Day.

St. Valentine's celebrated in Tirana prison

TIRANA (AP) — A truck minutes after it was hit by a bomb, those jailed for murder in their spouses were in the first time allowed to see their families.

Saddam discusses crisis with Moroccan king
BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraqi President Saddam Hussein spoke by telephone Monday with Morocco's King Hassan II on Baghdad's crisis with the United Nations over disarmament, the official Iraqi news agency INA reported.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية مستقلة عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية. الراي.

Iraq frees 26 Palestinian prisoners
BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq has freed 26 Palestinians under a general amnesty for Arab prisoners declared by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein 11 days ago, a Palestinian embassy source said on Monday.

Volume 23 Number 6766

AMMAN TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1998, SHAWWAL 20, 1418

Price: Jordan 200 fils

King receives American, European delegation of investors, financiers

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Monday received in Baghdad Palace a delegation representing world financiers and investors based in the U.S. and Europe.

Minister of Industry and Trade Hani Mulki and Central Bank Governor Ziyad Fariz. The delegation earlier met with Prince Hassan in the presence of Mr. Anani and a number of Jordanian officials and businessmen.



His Majesty King Hussein receives a delegation of investors from the U.S. and Europe on Monday (Photo by Yousef Allan)

Dr. Anani outlined to the delegation the present Jordanian economic situation pointing out the areas for investment. Duraid Muhawneh, secretary general of the Jordan Valley Authority, pointed out areas for joint Jordanian-Israeli investments in the Jordan Rift Valley.

More than 200 dead in Taiwan plane crash

TAOYUAN (AFP) — More than 200 people were killed when a China Airlines plane crashed in thick fog and burst into flames after smashing into a row of houses just outside Taipei's International Airport Monday evening, officials said.



A rescue worker scrambles through the charred wreckage of a Taiwan airliner that crashed and disintegrated in flames on Monday at Taipei's International Airport, slamming into nearby houses seen in the background (Reuters photo)

Jordan sees Israeli probe report on Mossad assassination attempt as a negative sign; Misha'al says he is 'not surprised'

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan on Monday blasted the conclusion of an Israeli inquiry team that investigated the foiled assassination attempt on the life of a Hamas leader in Amman in Sept.

Hamas politburo chief Khaled Misha'al, who survived the September 25 assassination bid by two agents of Israel's security service, the Mossad, said he was not surprised by the results of the inquiry.

"The decision to carry out the attack in Jordan was based on the principle that no place in the world should be allowed to serve as a safe harbour for those who plan to carry out murders and acts of terror in Israel," the report by the three-man team said.

"The commission does not question this policy, but nevertheless proposes that the government discuss it, define its scope and establish ground rules for its implementation," it added.

Arab peoples frustrated by U.N. 'duality' in enforcing international legitimacy in region — Prince Hassan

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan has said that the Arab peoples are being frustrated by what they feel as U.N. "duality" in enforcing international legitimacy in the region.

speaking of pretty large egos. The moment came when Russia and China and the Pacific Rim countries said to the North Koreans enough is enough. But the stick also came with a carrot.

Q: What is the American policy, as you see it?
A: American think tanks present it as being governed by three vested interests; oil, weapons sales and the qualitative advantage of, and strategic relationship with, Israel.

Prince Hassan also outlined the need for finding a diplomatic solution to the U.N.-Iraqi crisis so as to save the Iraqis and the whole area the consequences of a military strike.

Following is the full text of the interview as it appeared in Newsweek:

Newsweek: Why is there so much opposition in the Arab World to military action against Iraq?
Prince Hassan: I don't think the elite are saying the United Nations is to be blamed for irresponsible actions in threatening the use of force. However, I think that the threat of force should be used as a stick which you wave, but you don't necessarily beat the Iraqis with. Let's look at North Korea, for example. North Korea possesses more weapons of mass destruction than Iraq ever imagined. And if we speak about ego, look at [the late] Kim Il Sing and compare him with Saddam Hussein. You are

Q: And the anger among the Arab people?
A: Clearly, there's a deep sense of humiliation and outrage. You see the Palestinian demonstrations [supporting Iraq]. Why aren't United Nations resolutions being implemented [in the Israeli occupied territories]? There is this impression of duality of implementation of U.N. resolutions. As far as people are concerned, it's all very well for officials in the West to stand up and say we are not targeting civilians [in Iraq]. Well, clearly nobody in his right mind is going to target civilians. [But] there is no such thing as a clean war.

Q: Edward Said, a noted Palestinian intellectual who teaches in America, recently wrote that the possibility of a military strike against Iraq reflects the failure of Washington's Middle East policy. Do you agree?
A: Let me look at the absence of policy since 1990. Every initiative taken has been taken [with the] support of the United States. We signed a peace treaty, we went to the United States to shake hands on the White House lawn, we got the imprimatur of approval and the readiness to support. But

Q: How should America take the lead?
A: By moving to a statesmanlike view of the region. When three countries attacked Egypt over the Suez Canal in 1956, it was the United States who called it off. President Eisenhower said enough is enough, and he won considerable respect in the region.

Annan awaits U.S. green light while Australian troops join Gulf build-up

Tarwaneh: Annan trip to Baghdad is final chance to diffuse crisis

Combined Agency Dispatch

FOREIGN MINISTER Fayed Tarwaneh said on Monday a possible visit by U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan to Baghdad would be a final chance to diffuse a crisis over weapons inspections before U.S.-led strikes.

the fourth leg of a tour to muster Arab support for the Baghdad government. Foreign Minister Sahhaf, who was to hold talks with French President Jacques Chirac in Paris on Tuesday, said he could also meet the U.N. secretary general the following day in the French capital.

[Mr. Annan] will stop over in Paris on the way to Baghdad, but we have no confirmation," French Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Anne Gazeau-Secret told reporters in Paris. "We hope the five members of the Security Council will approve his mission to Baghdad," she added.

worsening crisis, along with the Pope's encouragement to Mr. Kofi Annan to go to Baghdad to [try to] thwart any military option," the statement said.

Jordan weighs its options caught between crisis to the east and west of its borders

By Ghadeer M. Taher
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — With the Middle East peace process all but dead, and the spectre of a third Gulf war looming on the horizon, Jordan finds itself, once again, caught between a potential disaster to the west and a certain catastrophe to the east.

far the Kingdom may suffer yet another blow with a cross-fire of regional turmoil. Over the past several years, Jordan's domestic, regional and international policies have been shaped by three major developments: the peace treaty with Israel, the situation in Iraq and the democratisation process.

NEWS ANALYSIS
widely-expected military strike against Iraq, one it can hardly afford.

openness, permitting regional groups and lobbies to set up shop in the country, has contributed to its increasing susceptibility and vulner-

ability to regional political turbulence. In the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf war, the peace process has strongly affected

some Arab states, critical of the Kingdom's moves to normalise relations with the Jewish state.

cooperation. "Jordan realises, whether it likes it or not, that its raison d'être is its pivotal role in the peace process," commented a senior diplomat. "And now Netanyahu is pulling the rug from under Jordan's feet. The essential question is 'if there is no light at the end of the tunnel, what will happen to this relationship?'"

and complement the country's structural adjustment programme. Politicians and economists worry that a continued stalemate on the Palestinian-Israeli track coupled with a potential strike against Iraq could severely reverse Jordan's successful economic restructuring and fiscal and monetary stabilisation programme, which is now in its final stages.

(Continued on page 7)

Discovery of headless bodies raises Algerian village weekend death toll

ALGIERS (AFP) — The death toll in a weekend attack on an Algerian village rose to 21 after the headless bodies of four kidnapped villagers were found, an Algiers newspaper reported Monday.

The authorities had previously said that 17 people — including members of the local self-defence force — were killed in the attack Saturday at Tamesna, in the Saida region, southwest of the Algeria

capital.

But the toll went up after the discovery of the decapitated bodies of four people who had been abducted during the attack, L'Autorité reported.

In addition, eight people were killed in an attack on a nearby hamlet, the newspaper added. Most of them were also decapitated.

In total, 44 people died violently on Saturday alone in Algeria, where massacres, kidnappings

and bomb attacks are regularly blamed on Islamists six years after the army cancelled elections that fundamentalists were poised to win.

Several newspapers Monday reported that several dozen Islamists had been killed as the security services mounted a series of operations against their hideouts.

Eleven civilians were slain at Chegua, in the M'sila region 250 kilomet-

res southeast of Algiers, and four travellers killed at Ain Al Melh, in the Medea region.

On Sunday, a police officer was shot and killed in broad daylight in Al Biar, in the hills above Algiers, the El Watan newspaper reported. The gunman then shot wildly into the air, creating panic among onlookers so that he was able to flee "in all tranquillity," it said.

Arafat urges Saddam to abide by U.N. resolutions

JERICHO (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat on Monday said he has called on Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to abide by U.N. resolutions and avert a threatened U.S. strike on the country.

"I sent two letters to President Saddam Hussein telling him that it is very important to implement Security Council resolutions to avoid war," Mr. Arafat told reporters.

"We don't want any harm

to come to the Iraqi people, the Palestinians or the Israelis, we only want a peaceful solution," he said.

The Palestinian leadership, which openly backed Iraq during the 1991 Gulf war, has sought a low profile in the current crisis, but Mr. Arafat sent two envoys to Baghdad to press for a diplomatic end to the crisis.

The Palestinian envoys, Sakher Habash, secretary general of the central committee of Arafat's Fateh

movement and Minister of Public Works Azzam Al Ahmad, left the Iraqi capital Monday, Palestinian sources in Baghdad said.

The Palestinian National Authority has also ordered a ban on pro-Iraq demonstrations in the Palestinian territories and demanded that newspapers censor pro-Iraqi writing.

But several rallies have been held in the self-rule areas in recent days in defiance of the clampdown.

Saddam serves interests of U.S., Israel — Saudi prince

DUBAI (AFP) — Iraqi President Saddam Hussein only serves the interests of the United States and Israel with his crises, a Saudi prince who commanded an anti-Iraqi Arab coalition in the 1991 Gulf war said Monday.

Prince Khaled Bin Abdel Aziz charged in his London-based newspaper Al Hayat that President Hussein had "created a crisis to attract a strike, for which the Iraqi people alone will pay the price."

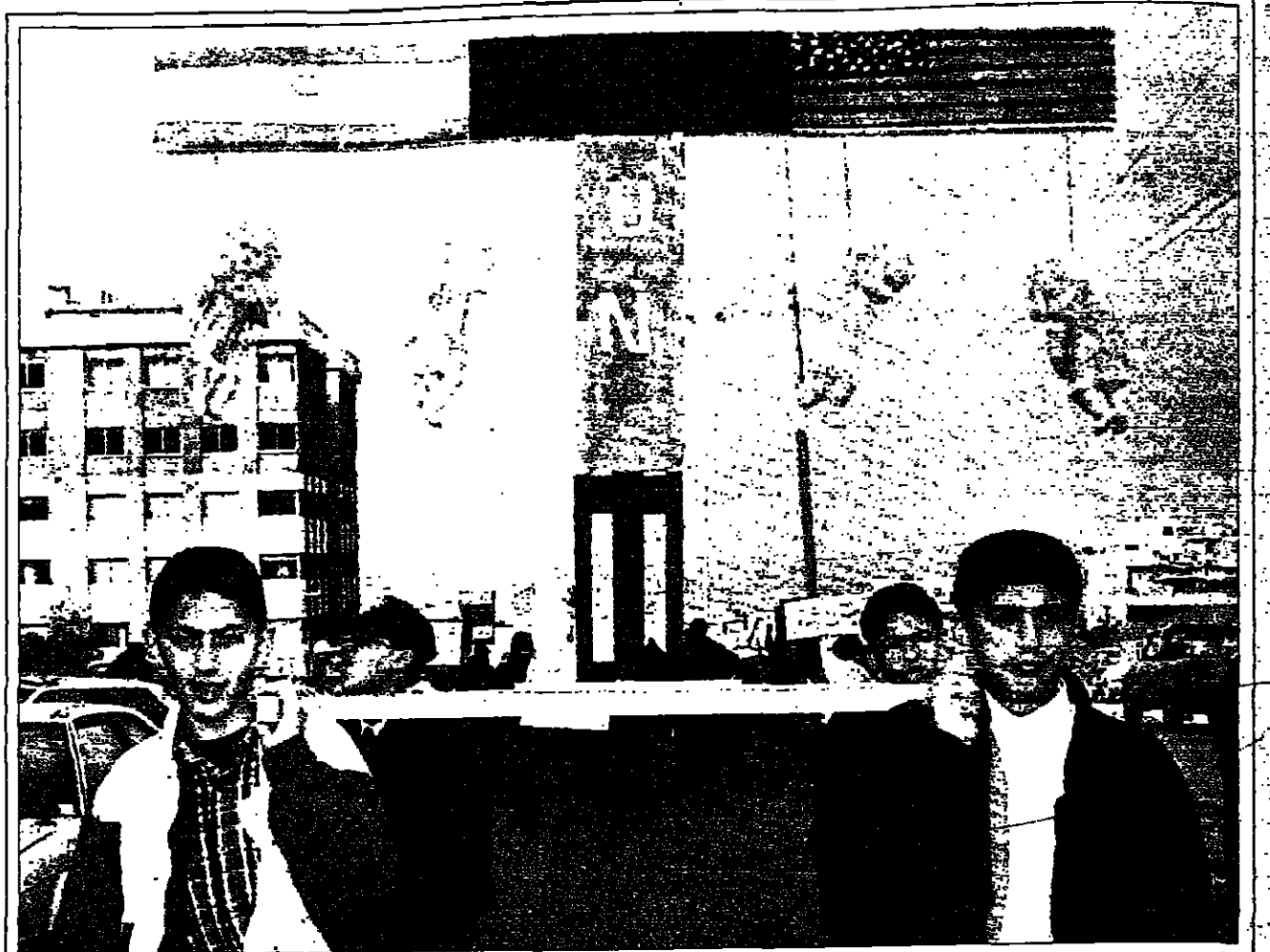
"Ever since his defeat in Kuwait in 1991, the actions of the Iraqi president have only served the interests of the Americans and the Israelis," he said in an editorial.

Prince Khaled asked if President Hussein "gets pleasure from attracting strikes, without a care for his people or the misfortunes of his country," which has been under sanctions since its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

"Meanwhile, what has become of the peace process, the [Jewish] settlements in Jerusalem, the West Bank and Golan, what has become of the Lockerbie [plane bombing] affair and the embargo against Libya?" the retired general asked.

"Even if the Americans and Israelis erected a golden statue in his honour, it would not be enough reward for the services which he [Saddam] has rendered them," said the son of the defence minister, Prince Sultan Bin Abdul Aziz.

The prince led Arab troops in the U.S.-led coalition which evicted Iraqi forces from Kuwait in February 1991.



SCHOOLCHILDREN CARRY GALLOWS: Lebanese schoolchildren Monday carry toy dolls, representing Arab children, hanging from gallows under United States and Israeli flags during a protest in front of the United Nations headquarters in Beirut. The pro-Iranian Hizbollah, which organised the protest, accused the U.S. of causing suffering to Arab children and urged the U.N. to take action against them. Hizbollah is locked in a conflict to oust Israel from the 15km-wide occupation zone in south Lebanon (Reuters photo)

Israeli embassy dismisses reports of commercial section closure

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Israeli embassy on Monday dismissed reports of the closure of its commercial section in Amman as a result of the modest trade volume between the two sides.

"There will not be any closure of the commercial section in the embassy," said Roey Gilad, press attaché at the Israeli embassy in Amman.

"Contrary to what is being published, Israel wants to enlarge its trade with Jordan," Mr. Gilad told the Jordan Times.

He said Israel's minister

of trade and industry, Nathan Sharansky, is expected to arrive here Feb. 23 for talks on trade between the two sides.

"Mr. Sharansky's visit will focus on expanding trade exchange between the two sides," the spokesman added.

Mr. Gilad was responding to news reports from Tel Aviv that the Israeli minister of trade and industry was considering closing the commercial section due to Israel's dissatisfaction over the trade volume between the two sides.

The reports also said Israel's commercial attaché in Amman, Sha'ol Sasson,

would be recalled to Tel Aviv after his tenure ends in six months.

Israeli trade figures indicate that the trade volume between Amman and Tel Aviv in 1997 amounted to \$32 million, with Israeli exports totalling \$20 million. In 1996, trade volume reached \$14 million, with Israeli exports to Amman amounting to \$9 million.

Another source at the Israeli embassy said a "possible" Israeli decision to close some of its commercial attachés may have been prompted by the Israeli finance ministry's decision to close 17 of its 38 commercial offices worldwide.

The source added that he did not believe a closure of Israel's commercial section would take place, but possibly the full-time commercial section would be replaced "with a part-time one. But until now nothing has been changed."

In October 1994, Jordan and Israel signed a peace treaty that ended decades of hostility.

The treaty provided for trade cooperation in different fields. Several Israeli businessmen have visited Jordan and established joint ventures with their Jordanian counterparts, mainly in the cloth and textile industry.

Egyptian police said to hold militants

CAIRO (R) — Egypt's illegal Muslim Brotherhood group on Monday said police last week detained 10 of its members in the Mediterranean city of Alexandria.

Spokesman Mamoun Al Hodeibi said they were arrested on Thursday after a private newspaper said police had detained five other members and were severely torturing them.

Mr. Hodeibi said the report named the officer responsible for the torture. "Torturing them is another crime added to detaining them in the first place," he said.

Police were not immediately available for comment.

but Interior Minister Habib Al Adli told the State's Advisory Council on Monday that police had arrested two "terrorists" planning attacks against the state.

The Brotherhood is the largest and most influential Islamist political organisation in Egypt. It says it seeks to transform Egypt into an Islamist state through democratic, peaceful means, including elections.

But the government maintains the Brotherhood is just a front for violent Islamist groups such as the Gamaa Islamiyah, which in 1992 launched an armed campaign to topple the government.

Mr. Adli told the council

that the Brotherhood was in touch with other "terrorist groups," the government's name for its Islamist opponents.

"The Brotherhood is in contact with other terrorist groups, which are considered its branches. It was formed on the basis of religion, but deviated into assassinations," he said.

"We cannot say we have completely rooted out terrorism in Egypt, but it has been contained," Mr. Adli said.

Almost 1,200 people, mostly militants and policemen, have died in more than five years of political violence.

Morocco, Italy sign convention to fight drugs, illegal immigration

RABAT (R) — The interior ministers of Morocco and Italy on Monday signed a convention committing them to cooperate in fighting drugs and illegal immigration.

"It is a collaboration accord to use together a system drawn up by Italy for the continual exchange of information for common operations," Italian Interior Minister Giorgio Napolitano told a news conference in Rabat.

He said Italy's new immigration law aimed at draw-

ing a clear line between illegal immigrants and legal expatriates. "We have had too many Italian immigrants in the last decades not to be human about the issue today," he said.

Mr. Napolitano said some 130,000 Moroccan expatriates were living legally in Italy, the biggest foreign community in his country.

Moroccan Interior Minister Driss Basri said Morocco needed an equal effort from European Union (EU) countries to help tackle the issues of drugs and immi-

gration.

"Morocco cannot be told to make the same efforts without getting the same assistance," Mr. Basri said.

He said Italy was the EU member with which Rabat had the best cooperation, notably on efforts to convert cannabis plantations in the north of Morocco into what he termed "more promising crops."

Northern Morocco is used as a springboard by illegal migrants trying to reach Europe.

Turkish police arrest five suspected of planning contract killing of industrialist

ANKARA (AFP) — Police in Turkey have arrested five people suspected of planning to kill an industrialist, two newspapers reported Monday.

The suspects were picked up Friday in Ankara and in Bursa, in the northwest, before they were able to carry through with their mission to kill Cavit Caglar, the Hurriyet and Sabah newspapers said.

Mr. Caglar, who is based in Bursa, has a business empire that includes Turkey's NTV all-news television channel.

He is also an independent member of parliament and

one-time government minister, having quit the conservative True Path Party in 1996 after falling out with its leader Tansu Ciller.

It is suspected that the order to kill Mr. Caglar came from underworld kingpin Alaattin Cakici, who lives abroad and who has been accused in several cases, including that of his wife's murder in 1996.

Beside Mr. Caglar, the contract killers were allegedly ordered to hunt down another former True Path interior minister, Mehmet Agar, the two newspapers reported.

Mr. Agar lost his parlia-

mentary immunity in December after he was named in the so-called Susurluk affair, in which Mr. Ciller's husband Ozer Ciller has been linked. That case involves contacts between Turkish politicians and organised crime.

Last Tuesday, the state security court in Istanbul opened an investigation into Mr. Agar — in relation with the Susurluk affair — for allegedly having "formed an illegal gang" and "abuse of power."

If convicted, he could face six to 12 years in prison.

The Susurluk affair came

to light in November 1996 after a car accident near the western town of the same name, in which a wanted underworld figure, Abdullah Catli, died alongside a high-ranking police officer, Huseyin Kocadag.

Sedat Bucak, a True Path MP, was injured.

The fact that the three men were all in the same car was seen by many Turks as proof of dubious relations between the police, organised crime and some politicians.

Mr. Agar was interior minister at the time of the accident, and was forced to resign.

JORDAN TELEVISION Tel. 773111-19	
PROGRAMME TWO	
14:10	Cartoon — Cro
16:30	French Cartoon Films
18:00	Small Talk
18:30	Border Town
19:00	Le Journal
19:15	French Documentary
19:30	News Headlines
19:35	Comedy — A Whole New Ball Game
20:00	What Would You Do?
20:30	Encounter
21:10	Drama — Burned Bridge
22:00	News in English
22:30	Feature Film — "Good-bye Rageddy Ann"
23:59	Metro Cafe
PRAYER TIMES	
04:55	Fajr
06:13	(Sunrise) Duha
11:50	Dhuhr
14:58	Asr
17:26	Maghreb
18:44	Isha
CHURCHES	
St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweibeh. Tel. 810740	
Assemblies of God Church Tel.	

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR	
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632787.	De la Salle Church Tel. 661757.
632788.	Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366
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Queen honours winner of young writers competition

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor Monday met with Najeh Abu Zein, who won the award of the European-Mediterranean Partnership Competition for Young Writers, at the Noor Al Hussein Foundation (NHF), according to a press release.

Queen Noor expressed her pride in Mr. Abu Zein's achievements, whose contributions as a script writer, actor and workshop leader at the NHF Performing Arts Centre have contributed greatly to the success of the centre's projects.

Mr. Abu Zein's script, named "Intersection Area," portrays the conflict between those who are secluded, introverted and isolated from other cultures for purely religious and cultural differences and others who are not. It stresses the necessity of unity and inter-communication.

The competition, entitled "Joining Sea," featured the works of 219 writers between the ages of 17-35 from 20 countries and aimed to enhance the European-Mediterranean partnership launched in Barcelona in 1995, which called for greater cooperation in social, cultural and human affairs, the statement said.

Mr. Abu Zein joined the NHF in 1990 and worked as an administrative and artistic assistant to the director of the Performing Arts Centre. He participated as a script writer in the NHF award winning musical "Al Sawana" and the children's television programme "The Magic Flute," which also won a silver medal from the 1997 Tunis International Contest.

Earlier, Queen Noor chaired the bi-monthly Executive Committee

meeting at the NHF, which approved the proposed organisational restructuring of the NHF.

According to NHF Executive Director Sima Bahous, "it will accommodate new development thinking and will ensure that NHF projects continue to be responsive to Jordan's development needs and to work towards sustainability and self-reliance with the overall object of improving the quality of life of Jordanians."

The restructuring is based on the results of different studies carried out by the International Labour Organisation, the United States Agency for International Development, the Jordan Institute of Public Administration and the United Group Consulting and Management Company, the statement concluded.

Swedish FM departs after three-day visit focusing on Iraq-U.N. crisis, peace process

AMMAN (Petra) — Swedish Foreign Minister Lena Hjelm-Wallen Monday wound up a three-day visit to Jordan by announcing that Sweden and Jordan hold identical views on the need to reach a diplomatic solution to the Iraq-U.N. crisis.

But she noted in a pre-departure statement to the press that "should diplomatic efforts fail, we will have to refer to the U.N. charter to solve the problem."

"We cannot rule out the

use of force but we are doing everything possible to remove the spectre of war from the region, because Sweden is a peace-loving country and does not believe in settling disputes through the use of force," said Ms. Hjelm-Wallen.

She called on the Iraqi government to realise the dangerous situation and cooperate with the U.N. to avert further suffering on the part of the Iraqi people.

The Swedish minister said she met with Iraqi Foreign

Minister Mohammad Said Al Sahhaf and tried to convince him of the seriousness of the situation.

She said force can be used and Iraq must respect and implement U.N. resolutions.

Ms. Hjelm-Wallen added that Sweden is committed to applying this concept to all parties in the Middle East.

Referring to an expected visit to Iraq by U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, the Swedish minister said: "I hope that Mr. Annan will

explain to the Iraqi leadership the complete picture of the situation, since any explosion would have serious consequences not only on Iraq, but also on the countries surrounding Iraq, especially Jordan, which has witnessed waves of refugees in the past."

On the Middle East peace process, she said "We have to exert all efforts to put it back on the right track."

Foreign Minister Fayez Tarawneh, who saw the Swedish minister off at the

airport, told journalists that the Iraqi crisis was at the heart of the discussions the Swedish minister held with His Majesty King Hussein, HRH Crown Prince Hassan, and the government. He also noted that the two nations' views were identical.

Before leaving, Ms. Hjelm-Wallen visited the Haya Arts Centre and met with Amman Mayor Mandouh Abbadi, who outlined the centre's activities and presented her with a gift.

Visiting delegation pledges support for Kingdom's projects

AMMAN (Petra) — A delegation from the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development (ADFD) Monday pledged the fund's backing for Jordanian infrastructure and social projects.

ADFD Assistant Director General Ahmad Hassan Bager, the head of the delegation, offered the assistance during a meeting with Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, with whom he reviewed Jordanian-Gulf relations and Jordanian development plans.

Dr. Majali expressed Jordan's appreciation of the ADFD's continued assistance to the Kingdom, especially in water and infrastructure projects.

He said the Kingdom's scarce water resources assume great importance because they play a vital role in the country's economic, agricultural, industrial and tourism fields.

At the meeting, which was also attended by Minister of Planning Rima Khalaf and UAE Ambassador Ahmad Ali Zaabi, the prime minister outlined Jordan's plans for building dams in order to store rain water.

Also Monday, Senate Speaker Zeid Rifai received the delegation, whose members outlined ADFD activities and programmes and its financing of development schemes in the Kingdom.

Voicing Jordan's gratitude to the ADFD for its help, Mr. Rifai expressed hope that the fund would continue extending assistance to the Kingdom.

Embassies encouraging nationals to follow normal routine despite tensions in Gulf

By Amy Henderson
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — As the U.S. bolstered forces in and around the Gulf, Western diplomatic missions in Amman Monday said they are continuing business as usual and are encouraging their citizens residing in Jordan to do the same.

The U.S. embassy told the Jordan Times that there was presently "no special campaign" to encourage citizens to register or leave the country. However, an embassy spokesman said U.S. citizens are always welcome to register their names and whereabouts at the embassy.

The spokesman also gave a statement saying that "the embassy has distributed two messages to U.S. citizens making sure they are aware of a public announcement distributed by the State Department on the current situation in the Middle East."

On Saturday, the U.S. State Department issued an advisory to Americans to avoid

travel to the West Bank and Gaza and to use caution if travelling to Jerusalem. Also, the consulate in Jerusalem suspended the personal travel of employees to the West Bank and placed restrictions on official travel.

Although British Prime Minister Tony Blair is still "standing shoulder to shoulder" with the U.S. initiative on Iraq, a spokesman for the British embassy in Amman said the embassy was not encouraging its nearly 2,000 citizens to leave Jordan in anticipation of a U.S.-led military strike against Iraq, nor was it advising British citizens to avoid the region. It is, however, strongly recommending against any travel to Iraq, where there is no British consular representation.

The embassy yesterday ran a notice in local newspapers asking that all British citizens to contact the consular section to obtain a registration form and advise the embassy of any changes of address and/or telephone numbers.

However, the spokesperson said the notice was a regular one that appears twice a year in the press.

"We do feel that Jordan is safe, although we are urging citizens to be cautious because we cannot rule out the possibility of random acts of violence," the spokesperson said.

Other European embassies also reported that, although citizens are always encouraged to register, their officials were reassuring nationals that they expected personal security would not be affected in the event of an escalation of the crisis with Iraq.

"Our normal contingency plan is updated annually, and we recently had a meeting with [French citizens] in different neighbourhoods who are responsible for passing information onto other [French nationals] in the event of a crisis," said a spokesperson for the French embassy.

"But we feel that there is nothing here that will affect their security, and we do

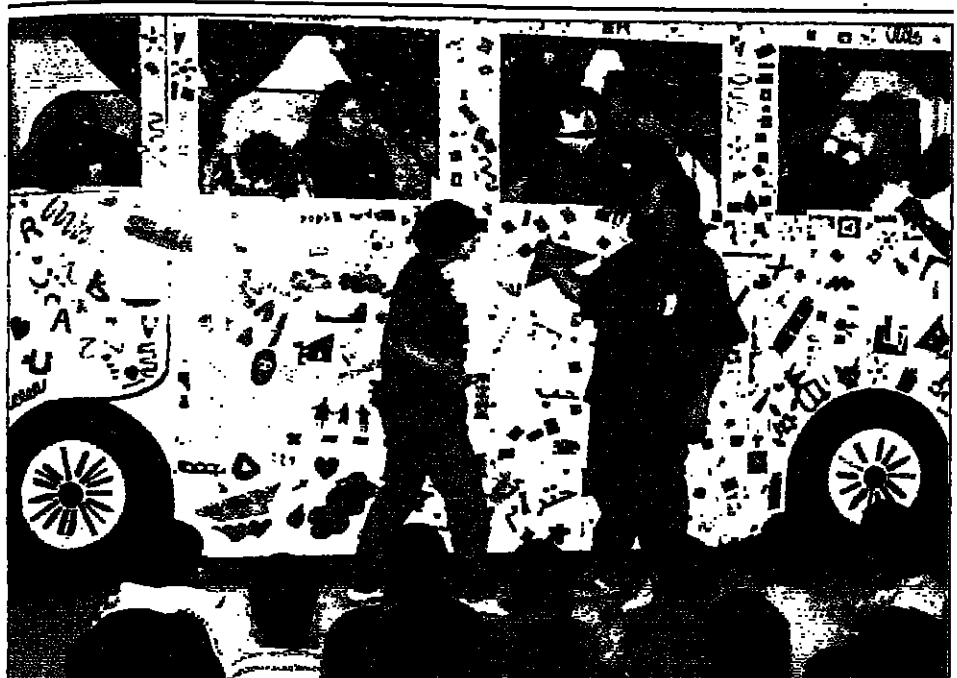
want to reassure them of this. It is our impression that people feel secure here anyway," he said.

The French embassy estimates there are approximately 650 French nationals residing in Jordan.

The German embassy also said it was "in contact with people," and although it always advises its 700 nationals to register their whereabouts at the embassy, it is not taking extra precautionary measures.

An embassy spokesperson said it had had "very few" enquiries about procedures and regarded it as a sign of Germans' confidence in their security here.

"We do feel that people are not worried about this. Most of our nationals have been living in Jordan a long time, and understand the situation very well and so tend to worry less," she said. "They are also well aware that Jordan is taking its own precautions and have confidence in that."



The cast of Kanafesh perform for elementary students at one of the Kingdom's schools (Photo courtesy of Noor Al Hussein Foundation Performing Arts Centre)

Programme continues teaching schoolchildren about non-violent conflict resolution

By Jumana Abu Hannoud
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — For over a year, the Noor Al Hussein Foundation Performing Arts Centre (PAC) has been conducting a programme for the country's elementary schoolchildren promoting dialogue and non-violent problem resolution.

The programme, entitled "Kanafesh," is a theatrical production that introduces 10-11 year-olds to a fantastic world of "wacky" puppets where all problems can be solved through peaceful means and without prejudice, according to PAC Director Lina Anel.

"Kanafesh offers a creative way to address an

extremely sensitive issue. Not only does it address physical conflict, but also more subtle psychological violence with which all youth are in some way familiar," Ms. Anel said.

In addition to the puppet performance, the programme, conducted in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Fundacion CODESPA, a Spanish educational and cultural NGO, is supplemented by comic books, colouring books, posters, stickers, and teachers' guides. Ms. Anel told the Jordan Times.

She explained that after the thirty-minute puppet show, the children participate in a two-hour workshop with five parts, each helping the chil-

dren express their feelings toward violence and peace artistically using plays, music and "peace treaties."

"The need for this kind of education is to discover the causes of conflicts and that they are not necessarily a bad thing. Conflicts help us understand differences and learn problem-solving skills to deal with them non-violently," she added.

The programme, which began in January 1997, reaches over 500 children per week through school-to-school performances all over the Kingdom. Over 10,000 children in Amman, Irbid, and the south have been exposed to the programme's message.

Relatives of Jordanian political prisoners in Kuwait stage sit-in at ICRC office

By Lima Nabil
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Relatives and family members of 35 Jordanian and Palestinian political detainees in Kuwait Monday staged a brief sit-in at the Amman office of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and submitted a petition to the ICRC representative asking him to intervene and secure the release.

The jailed Jordanians and Palestinians are serving prison sentences ranging from 20 years to life after being found guilty by Kuwaiti courts of "collaborating" with Iraq during its occupation of the emirate.

The families of the prisoners

submitted a written petition to the ICRC head of mission requesting his offices to secure their release on humanitarian grounds, since those in jail have left behind families without means of income.

Fatimah, a mother, said her two sons were imprisoned in Kuwait in 1991, one at the age of 15. She added that she had visited them two years ago and appealed to the Kuwaiti authorities to release them because their father was very ill and about to die, but nothing came of her request.

Suha, another participant at the ICRC sit-in, told the Jordan Times that her mother Hamideh and two of her brothers are serving 20-year prison terms.

In the statement to the ICRC

representative, the families said the prisoners, who have so far spent seven years in jail, were victims of the Gulf war.

"The detainees were summarily convicted and imprisoned. They have been subjected to torture in Kuwait's prisons and are being treated as dangerous criminals," said the petition.

"We would like to point out that the Jordanian and Palestinian prisoners' human rights are being violated, and so it is regrettable to see the ICRC failing to secure their release," the statement added.

It said: "The imprisonment of these citizens has caused untold sufferings for their families and we hope that your organisation will do all in its power to secure their

release."

The Kuwaitis were reported to have imprisoned more than 60 Jordanians, accusing them of collaborating with Iraq. Kuwait released 25 of these prisoners in March 1997 under an amnesty announced by the Kuwaiti government in Feb. 1997.

Mu'in Qassab, the assistant representative at the ICRC office, said the Amman office was constantly carrying letters to the imprisoned persons in Kuwait from their families, adding that the ICRC has to date arranged for three visits to imprisoned Jordanians in Kuwait between 1995 and 1997. He said the ICRC will pursue this humanitarian mission.

Majali calls for campaign to promote archaeological sites

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali Monday called on the Department of Antiquities, in conjunction with the Ministry of Education, to launch a public awareness campaign on Jordan's archaeological treasures.

The prime minister also urged the department to help establish an antiquities friendship club to support its efforts in protecting the Kingdom's archaeological sites.

Dr. Majali, who was speaking during a visit to the department, said marketing tourist and archaeological sites should be done on a sound basis and should benefit from other countries' experiences to enable the Kingdom to attract tourists from around the world.

Jordan, he said, abounds with religious, historic, and archaeological sites, making Jordan a veritable museum of vast treasures.

Dr. Majali added that skilled and highly-qualified personnel are needed to do the job.

Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Akel Bilalji reviewed the department's plans to upgrade and modernise services for tourists at the Nabatean city of Petra, the Greco-Roman city of Jerash, Karak, Irbid and the Citadel in Amman.

He noted that the ministry was in constant touch with colleagues in Arab and foreign countries to gain more experience in tourism affairs and attract investment for tourism projects.

Cinema offers film-goers chance to preview movies at home

By Ahmed Naser
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The on-line experience in the Kingdom took a new step after a local cinema began offering movie-goers the opportunity to preview the latest attractions on a bulletin board service (BBS).

Galleria, a five-month old cinema theatre in Abdoun, in cooperation with Primus, a local BBS, has had movie clips, or "trailers," available for three recent movies, "Romeo and Juliet," "Fool's Russian" and "Horse Alone 3."

Amer Nassereddin, Primus' marketing manager, said trailers would also be made available for Galleria's two current attractions, "Seven Years in Tibet" and "I Know What You Did Last Summer," within the next few days.

The trailers are between 15 seconds to a minute long and can take between three to 30 minutes to

download depending on where you are logged on from — downloading through a BBS connection is 10-times faster than going through the Internet.

Web surfers and BBS users in Jordan continually complain of poor Internet connections resulting from the Kingdom's low-quality, copper-based infrastructure.

In addition to the trailers, a visit to Galleria's home page provides potential theatre goers with the cinema's address, the cast of the current movies, stills and an opportunity to post comments on the quality of the Web site and theatre to both Primus and Galleria.

Galleria's home page, a virtual visit card that has been adopted by thousands of companies around the globe, can be visited through Primus' BBS and on the Web at www.cns.com.jo/galleria.

However, this new gimmick has its limitations, Mr. Nassereddin said, since

not all clips can be supplied and uploaded to the site due to problems associated with the availability of the trailer itself or technical limitations imposed by the size of the clip.

One example of a technical limitation was the trailer provided for "Risalah ila Al Wali (Letter to the Ruler)," an Arabic hit featuring the famous Egyptian comedian Adel Imam. After receiving the trailer, the staff determined that it would take at least two hours to download through even the fastest connection, and thus could not offer it to the public.

The largest trailer offered to date on Galleria's site takes a minimum of eight minutes to download and view through Primus' BBS connection.

Primus, which opened shop at the Middle East Technology Show (METS) in November 1996, has on-line inter-activity as its main aim.

DEPARTURES	
Amman (RJ) / Beirut	08:00
Amman (RJ) / London	10:00
Amman (RJ) / Paris	12:00
Amman (RJ) / Rome	14:00
Amman (RJ) / Athens	16:00
Amman (RJ) / Cairo	18:00
Amman (RJ) / Baghdad	20:00
Amman (RJ) / Damascus	22:00
Amman (RJ) / Jerusalem	24:00
Amman (RJ) / Tel Aviv	26:00
Amman (RJ) / Haifa	28:00
Amman (RJ) / Beirut	30:00
Amman (RJ) / London	32:00
Amman (RJ) / Paris	34:00
Amman (RJ) / Rome	36:00
Amman (RJ) / Athens	38:00
Amman (RJ) / Cairo	40:00
Amman (RJ) / Baghdad	42:00
Amman (RJ) / Damascus	44:00
Amman (RJ) / Jerusalem	46:00
Amman (RJ) / Tel Aviv	48:00
Amman (RJ) / Haifa	50:00
Amman (RJ) / Beirut	52:00
Amman (RJ) / London	54:00
Amman (RJ) / Paris	56:00
Amman (RJ) / Rome	58:00
Amman (RJ) / Athens	60:00
Amman (RJ) / Cairo	62:00
Amman (RJ) / Baghdad	64:00
Amman (RJ) / Damascus	66:00
Amman (RJ) / Jerusalem	68:00
Amman (RJ) / Tel Aviv	70:00
Amman (RJ) / Haifa	72:00
Amman (RJ) / Beirut	74:00
Amman (RJ) / London	76:00
Amman (RJ) / Paris	78:00
Amman (RJ) / Rome	80:00
Amman (RJ) / Athens	82:00
Amman (RJ) / Cairo	84:00
Amman (RJ) / Baghdad	86:00
Amman (RJ) / Damascus	88:00
Amman (RJ) / Jerusalem	90:00
Amman (RJ) / Tel Aviv	92:00
Amman (RJ) / Haifa	94:00
Amman (RJ) / Beirut	96:00
Amman (RJ) / London	98:00
Amman (RJ) / Paris	100:00

what's going on	
CONCERTS	LECTURE
* Performance by Danny Beal (a benefit for cancer patients in need) at Books@Cafe at 6:30 p.m. (for details call 849387, 5526440).	* "Digging Up History" by Dr. Hans-Dieter at Goethe-Institut, Jabal Amman at 6:30 p.m.
EXHIBITIONS	
* "Nine Months" at the British Council, Jabal Amman, at 6:00 p.m.	* Paintings by Sudanese artist Salah Al Murr at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens Street, until Feb. 23.
* German film "Ein fliehendes Pferd" (with subtitles in English) at Goethe-Institut, Jabal Amman on Wednesday, Feb. 18 at 5:30 p.m.	* Private collection of Mandouh Bishara at "A Vision, An Identity" at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until March 5 (Tel. 643251). Also displaying works by contemporary Arab artists — "The New Collection."
CULTURAL WEEK	
* Opening of the Chinese Cultural Week at the Orthodox Club, Abdoun at 7:00 p.m.	* "History of Cartoon Drawings" at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh, until Feb. 26.
	* Works by about a hundred artists from Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Lebanon and Jordan at Hammurabi Art Gallery, Gardens Street, until Feb. 20 (Tel. 5536098).
PLAY	
* Children's play "A Theatre Dream" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 10:00 a.m. (daily until Feb. 21).	

NEWS IN BRIEF

Majali extends condolences over death of Sudanese vice president
AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali Monday called at the Sudanese embassy in Amman to convey his condolences over the death of Sudanese Vice President Al Zubair Mohammad Saleh. Mr. Saleh passed away with other officials few days ago in a plane crash in southern Sudan.

Iraqi FM leaves for Beirut
AMMAN (Petra) — Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Said Sahhaf Monday left Amman for Beirut after a several-day official visit to the Kingdom. He held talks with His Majesty King Hussein, HRH Crown Prince Hassan and senior officials on the current Iraq-U.N. crisis. Mr. Sahhaf was seen off at the airport by Foreign Minister Fayez Tarawneh.

Polling begins in India as 250m voters get their chance

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Polling began Monday in the first phase of Indian elections widely expected to produce a hung parliament for the second time in as many years, the Election Commission said here.

Balloting began at 7:00 a.m. (0130 GMT) under heavy security in thousands of polling centres in 222 out of 545 parliamentary constituencies, officials said.

About 250 million of the country's 600 million voters are eligible to vote Monday. The voting will end at 5:00 p.m. (1130 GMT).

Three further days of polling take place on Feb. 22 and 28 and March 7.

Most analysts expect a fractured parliament with Hindu nationalists finishing as the largest party but without a decisive

majority.

Some 2,200 candidates, out of a total of 4,700, were in the fray Monday.

Among those whose fortunes will be decided on the opening day are outgoing Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral, H.D. Deve Gowda — Mr. Gujral's predecessor — and Chandra Shekhar, prime minister between 1990-91.

Chief Election Commissioner M.S. Gill said Monday:

"Everything is on the rails. Elections officials and security forces have moved everywhere."

The start of the elections, however, have been clouded by large-scale violence which have left around 100 people dead across the country.

The total included 48 civilians and six suspected militants who died in

a series of bomb blasts near a Hindu nationalist rally in the southern city of Coimbatore Saturday.

Nationalist leader Lal Krishna Advani, who was to have addressed the rally when the bombs went off but was delayed by a flight, later said he was the intended target.

Indian authorities outlawed two fundamentalist Muslim groups and arrested scores of their supporters following the explosions.

Most other election victims have been recorded in the north-east of the country, a region plagued by ongoing separatist rebellions. The state of Tripura has recorded 34 election-related deaths.

There have also been killings in the Himalayan state of Kashmir, where separatists, as in the north-east, have ordered

a polls boycott.

Mr. Advani's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party) and its allies are hoping to launch a coalition after the polls.

But analysts have warned that the once-dominant Congress party — the nationalists' main rival — and Mr. Gujral's outgoing centre-left United Front coalition might team up after the election to form a new alliance to keep BJP from power.

The Congress propped up a United Front coalition after a hung parliament in 1996 to keep out the nationalists. The government, however, collapsed in November last year after 18 months when the Congress withdrew its parliamentary backing.



A Hindu woman votes at a polling station in Meham, in the northern Indian state of Haryana during the first phase of mid-term general election February 16 (Reuters photo)

Japanese leader challenges U.S. heliport opponents

TOKYO (R) — Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto threw down the gauntlet Monday to recalcitrant Okinawa residents who oppose construction of a U.S. offshore heliport, saying he would not let the issue go.

Tokyo is keen to build the facility in the city of Nago on Okinawa despite a referendum in which a majority of local voters opposed the construction.

Mr. Hashimoto referred to the standoff between the government in Tokyo and residents of Okinawa in a speech to the Lower House of Parliament.

"We will persistently press for the local people's understanding and cooperation with the heliport construction," he said.

At issue is the removal of the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station at Futenma, also in Okinawa, in exchange for construction of the heliport in Nago.

Okinawa hosts the major-

ity of U.S. troops based in Japan, and more than 20 per cent of the island prefecture is taken up by American bases.

The campaign among Okinawans for the removal of all of the 27,000 U.S. troops from the prefecture gained momentum after a 12-year-old local girl was raped by three U.S. servicemen in 1995.

Tokyo has pushed for the new heliport, which would mean at least \$1 billion in contracts for a key constituency of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, the big construction companies.

Mr. Hashimoto played to local sentiments in his speech, saying the Futenma base, located in an urban neighbourhood, posed a danger to residents.

"We can't ignore this dangerous situation, and so I proposed the construction of an (offshore) heliport as the best way to replace the

Futenma facility," Mr. Hashimoto said.

"I still believe that."

Residents of the town of Nago voted against the heliport plan in a non-binding referendum last December, and Okinawa Governor Masahide Ota recently seconded their opposition.

Tokyo reacted angrily to Mr. Ota's dissent, threatening to pull the plug on sorely needed economic assistance that had been provisionally offered to Okinawa, the poorest of Japan's 47 prefectures.

In his speech, Mr. Hashimoto dangled the prospect of preferential treatment for Okinawa if cooperation with the project was forthcoming.

Mr. Hashimoto's offensive comes on the heels of mayoral polls in Nago earlier this month.

Analysts said Tokyo was at pains to downplay the fact that a long-time opponent to U.S. bases won.

Charge threat against Albanian opposition deputy over clash

TIRANA (AFP) — An Albanian opposition deputy belonging to the Democratic Party, who was involved in a clash with police in the northern town of Shkoder at the weekend, could be charged, the interior minister told AFP.

Interior Minister Neritan Ceka said that in the incident Saturday, the DP deputy, Azem Hajdari, and 15 people carrying guns, had refused to obey police who wanted to check their papers and search the six vehicles in which the group was travelling.

The group drove off in defiance of the police but were stopped at a road-block just before Lac about 20 kilometres southeast of Shkoder.

Gunfire erupted and went on into Sunday morning, when police finally managed to inspect the vehicles in which they found "a large quantity of arms", Mr. Ceka said.

Eleven people were arrested over the incident, said Mr. Ceka, who said one of the vehicles had been stolen.

He said two of four people who ran away were criminals suspected of having taken part in a bank robbery Friday at Tropoja, a DP bastion in northern Albania.

Mr. Ceka said Mr. Hajdari, who presently benefits from parliamentary immunity, could be charged. "We have asked the Tirana prosecutor to charge Mr. Hajdari with organising an armed group," said Mr. Ceka.

Mr. Hajdari gave a press conference Sunday at which he denied any wrongdoing. "It is another attack on me," he said.

If Mr. Hajdari is charged, it could further damage relations between the government and the opposition, DP leader, former President Sali Berisha condemned Sunday what he called the "act of political terrorism" against Mr. Hajdari and said his party would "review its position with regard to the parliament".

The DP which refused to accept defeat in last June's legislative elections, boycotted parliament for seven months before deciding early this month to take up its seats.

Australians reject republic model — poll

CANBERRA (R) — More Australians would rather keep Britain's Queen Elizabeth as head of state than vote for a republican model put forward by an historic constitutional forum, according to a newspaper poll Monday.

While majority support exists for cutting 210-year-old ties with Britain, the Sydney Morning Herald poll highlights the difficulties to be addressed by a national referendum in 1999 on whether Australia should become a republic.

Monarchist Prime Minister John Howard announced last Friday a binding national vote to let Australians choose between retaining legal ties with Britain or establishing a republic with its own head of state.

A constitutional convention earlier backed a model for a republic that would see a president appointed to a five-year term by the prime minister, opposition leader and parliament.

But the poll found only 43 per cent of voters approved of that republican model, while 45 per cent preferred no change.

"The (poll) figures suggest that republicans have a difficult job in front of them in winning the referendum when it is put to voters next year," the Herald said in an editorial.

"If they are divided, the referendum will fail."

For Australia to become a republic, the republican model chosen must win the support of the majority of all voters and a majority of voters in at least four of

Australia's six states in the 1999 referendum.

Only eight of 42 previous proposed changes to the Australian constitution have been successful since Australia became a federated nation in 1901.

Other polls show more than one in two Australians want a republic but that the republicans are split over whether a president should be appointed or elected by the people.

The Herald poll of 2,069 people Friday and Saturday found 18 per cent of republicans said they would vote against a republican based on the convention's model.

Republican Treasurer Peter Costello has warned he will seek to change the republican model before the national vote in 1999.

"I'm going to pitch for a good model first. I think we should be aiming for the best alternative and there's still a lot of work to be done," Mr. Costello said Sunday.

Mr. Costello has not detailed the changes he wants, but during the convention he voted for republican models where the prime minister had the final say on choosing a president.

Australian Republican Movement officials said they would lobby Mr. Costello to support the convention's model.

Australia is independent, but its constitution was passed as an act of British parliament. The queen's representative in Australia, the governor-general, has the power to sack governments.

Indonesian military plays down riots

JAKARTA (R) — Indonesia's new military commander Monday played down the impact of recent riots on national stability as fears of fresh outbreaks started to cripple public transport across the country's main island of Java.

General Wiranto, the former army chief-of-staff, was speaking to reporters at the palace after being installed in his new post by President Suharto.

"National stability is going ahead well. There have only been a few places where stability and the restoration of the economy have been disturbed. That's natural. Every nation has its problems," Gen. Wiranto said.

"There are rumours and speculation but let us say the rumours are garbage because they are causing restlessness in the community," Gen. Wiranto said.

Residents in various districts on Java said Monday public transport was being disrupted as bus drivers feared their vehicles would be attacked by rioters stayed off the roads.

Intercity buses in West Java were stoned and some had their windshields cracked Sunday as sporadic riots broke out in the towns of Kadipaten and Sumedang outside of Bandung, the provincial capital.

Residents said the normally bustling road between Bandung and

Cirebon, a nearby port town, appeared quiet Monday.

"Bus drivers are increasingly fearful of going on the roads as they fear being attacked," one Bandung resident said.

"The mobs have accused them of not backing their protests against rising fuel prices — even though the increases are not meant to take place until April," he said.

In East Java, particularly along the north coast and the scene of recent disturbances, some intercity buses between the provincial capital of Surabaya and the holiday island of Bali remained in their depots, leaving many residents stranded.

In Lumajang in East Java a mob burnt a warehouse Sunday and residents reported stoning of ethnic Chinese-owned shops in other centres.

Five people have died in the recent riots in Indonesia triggered by rising prices of basic commodities, with ethnic Chinese shopkeepers bearing the brunt of popular anger.

Rural poor with seemingly little comprehension of the real causes of the economic woes blame the Chinese for the price rises.

A severe drought last year and the dramatic depreciation of the rupiah currency have created an economic crisis in rural areas, leaving many jobless and unable to afford basic commodities.

HK branch of Xinhua accused of breaching privacy law

HONG KONG (AFP) — China's official Xinhua news agency faces possible legal action in Hong Kong following accusations by a pro-democracy campaigner that it refused to divulge details of a file on her, a report said Monday.

Emily Lau, head of the Frontier political party, complained to Privacy Commissioner Stephen Lau after the local branch of Xinhua claimed it had no file on her, the South China Morning Post said.

"It's common knowledge that they have information on all kinds of people," Emily Lau, a former journalist, was quoted as saying.

"One kind would be journalists, and another would be people who are active politically."

Stephen Lau was reported to have told her it appeared the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance had been violated and he had sent a report to the Secretary for Justice Elsie

Leung. Ms. Lau had used privacy laws passed in late 1996 to request a copy of the alleged Xinhua file on her. Six months later the agency replied it had no such file.

The deadline for releasing such information under the law is 40 days and carries a maximum fine for non-compliance of 10,000 Hong Kong dollars (\$1,280 U.S.).

If the agency is found to have information on Emily Lau its refusal to release it could see Xinhua officials jailed for up to six months, the English-language daily said.

"We'll see whether certain groups are above the law," said Ms. Lau, a vocal member of Hong Kong's pre-handover legislature, which was scrapped when Beijing resumed sovereignty of the territory last July.

The local branch of Xinhua served as China's de facto mission in Hong Kong when the territory was under British rule.

North Korea says it will assist reunions of separated families

SEOUL (AFP) — North Korea has said it would assist the reunion of North Koreans separated from family members in the country and abroad, South Korean monitors said Monday.

In an official North Korean broadcast Sunday, Pyongyang said it will open an "address information centre" to help the reunion of North Koreans separated from their family members, an official at Naewoe Press, the official monitoring agency here said.

"The party and the state have decided to open the centre in order to become more active in helping not only those living at home but also expatriates to locate their family members and rela-

tives," the broadcast said.

The North's Central Broadcasting said family members had only to report their personal information and when, where and how their families were separated.

The information centre will be set up as an affiliate of the State Security Agency, the North's police organisation.

A Naewoe official said it was difficult to tell if the broadcast would also apply to relatives of North Koreans living in South Korea, rather than in third countries.

"We are suspicious of the purpose because it came only through domestic radio station," the Naewoe official said noting that it had yet to be carried by the Korean Central News Agency

(KCNA) the North's external propaganda arm.

"Normally these broadcasts have political intentions. I believe the broadcast may be targeting Koreans living abroad, and not in South Korea," he said.

The broadcast was made after South Korean President-elect Kim Dae-jung renewed a call for expanding exchanges between the two Koreas including the setting up of family designated reunion points.

Mr. Kim, who takes office on Feb. 25, said he would place top priority on the reunion of families separated from the 1950-53 Korean war, many of whose members are aged.

Czech president's condition 'satisfactory' despite fever

PRAGUE (AFP) — The condition of Czech President Vaclav Havel who went into hospital last week with a lung infection, is "satisfactory" in spite of recurring fever, Deputy Health Minister Miroslav Cerkas said Sunday.

Compared to Thursday and Friday, Mr. Havel "is much better," said Dr. Cerkas who heads the medical team in charge of caring for the president.

The radio said Mr. Havel was visited by Prime Minister Josef Trosky Sunday at the Prague-Suresovice Military Hospital

where he was admitted Thursday.

The radio said the two men discussed problems besetting the small Civic Democratic Alliance party led by Deputy Prime Minister and Environment Minister Jiri Skalsky. The party, which is part of the ruling coalition, is striving to avert a scandal over its finances and a government spokesman admitted Saturday that Mr. Skalsky might shortly be forced to resign.

At the end of November, a scandal surrounding the financing of the Civic Democratic Party brought

down former prime minister Vaclav Klaus and his government which was replaced on Jan. 2 by a cabinet headed by the former Central Bank Governor Trosky.

Mr. Havel went into hospital Thursday for what doctors said were "respiratory problems of the right lobe linked to a bronchial infection".

The 61-year-old former dissident playwright had a tumour removed from his lungs in December 1996. More recently he spent three weeks in hospital in November for treatment for pneumonia.

Cuba marks sinking of Maine, calls on dissidents to build the nation

HAVANA (AFP) — Cuba Sunday commemorated the 100th anniversary of the mysterious explosion of the U.S. battleship Maine, which led to Cuba's war of independence — engineered by the United States.

A simple outdoor ceremony marking the event overlapped with the decision by the Cuban government last week to release scores of imprisoned dissidents.

The same day as he attended a ceremony at the foot of a monument to honour the 266 people killed by the explosion, Cuba's Foreign Minister Roberto Robaina encouraged Cuba's pardoned dissidents to help "build the nation."

"The pardon was not given with the intention of fomenting internal dissent," said Mr. Robaina, a leader of the Communist Party — the only legal political

party on the island.

Cuba agreed to the amnesty after being urged to do so by Pope John Paul II. During the Pontiff's Jan. 21-25 landmark visit, the Vatican gave officials a list of some 300 "prisoners of conscience" it wanted released.

The Cuban government has said it would not pardon 70 people on the list but the daily Granma reported that some 224 people not on it would also be freed.

This would constitute the largest release in a decade. In total, 106 of 270 inmates on a list the Vatican gave Cuba Jan. 22 during the Pope's landmark first visit to Communist-ruled Cuba "were already free," Granma reported, citing foreign ministry figures.

But Mr. Robaina insisted the amnesty was not to be seen as a gesture to placate

the United States — saying the mass release underscored Cuba's self-determination and was strictly humanitarian in nature.

Ironically, the 1898 conflict observed Sunday is considered by historians here not as the year of independence, but the year Cuba went from being a colony of Spain to being a quasi-colony of the United States.

Mystery still surrounds the sinking of the Maine. The battleship had been anchored in the bay for about three weeks when an explosion ripped through the ship the night of Feb. 15, sending it to the bottom of the sea killing 266 of its 350-member crew.

At that time, the island was in the throes of what Cubans know as the Second War of Independence, a war to end almost 400 years of Spanish colonial rule. Then

U.S. President William McKinley at first accepted prevailing wisdom that the disaster was sparked by an accident.

But later, the theory circulated within the United States that the explosion was sparked by elements within the Spanish military and the United States declared war on Spain. The conflict — known in the United States as the Spanish-American war — ended in four months with a resounding U.S. victory, ending a vast empire that once spanned much of the globe.

U.S. forces in Cuba largely ignored the Cuban rebels, who already had freed roughly half of the island by the time U.S. forces arrived. They disarmed the rebels and occupied Cuba until 1902, a source of bitter resentment to this day.

French police order tests on 30 people over schoolgirl murder

Cirebon, a nearby town, appeared Monday. "Bus drivers are increasingly fearful of the roads as they fear being attacked," one resident said. "The mobs have been protesting against rising prices — even though increases are not meant to take place until April."

In East Java, panic along the north coast of the scene of recent disturbances, some of the capital of Surabaya remained in their homes, leaving many stranded.

In Lumajang in East Java, a mob burnt a warehouse Sunday and reported stoning of Chinese-owned shops in other centres.

Five people have died in the recent riots in Indonesia, triggered by rising prices of basic commodities, including Chinese shopkeepers bearing the brunt of popular anger.

Rural poor with scanty little comprehension of the real causes of the economic woes blame the Chinese for the price rise. A severe drought has hit the dramatic depiction of the rural crisis in many jobless and unable to afford basic commodities.

of Xinhua preaching

Leung. Ms. Lau had used previous laws passed in late 1997 request a copy of the alleged Xinhua film on the Six months later the agency replied it had no such film. The deadline for releasing such information under the law is 40 days, and it takes a maximum of 109 Hong Kong dollars (\$15 U.S.).

If the agency is found to have information on the film, Ms. Lau's refusal to release it could see Xinhua officials jailed for up to six months under British rule.

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U.S.-President Bill Clinton at first accepted prevailing wisdom that the disaster was sparked by a accident. But later, the theory circulated within the United States that the explosion was sparked by elements within the Spanish military and the United States. It declared war on Spain. The conflict — known as the Spanish-American war — ended in four months with the surrendering U.S. victory. The war spanned much of the globe.

U.S. forces in Cuba largely ignored the Cubans who already had rebelled roughly half of the island by the time U.S. forces arrived. They overpowered the rebels and occupied Cuba until 1902.

source of bitter resentment on this day.



Soldiers from the Nigerian led West African peace keeping force ECOMOG inspect weapons captured during the battle for Freetown (Reuters photo)

'Swedes kidnapped in Dagestan alive'

STOCKHOLM (AFP) — Two Swedish aid workers kidnapped in the Russian republic of Dagestan on Jan. 8 are still alive, the Swedish foreign ministry said Sunday, after it received a video tape of the pair.

The video is the first sign that Daniel and Paulina Brolin, missionaries kidnapped in the Dagestani capital Makhachkala last month, are still alive, the ministry said.

The ministry, quoted by Swedish television, said they had received the video at the end of the week and would not comment on the content of the video nor on how the tape came into their possession.

"At the present time we do not want to make any comments at all about the tape, but we can say that we interpret the content as a sign that the Brolins are alive and that is obviously very positive news," foreign ministry spokeswoman Annika Thunborg said.

A spokesman for the couple's church in Vaesteraas west of Stockholm, who was shown the three-minute video, said no ransom demand appeared to have been made.

According to Swedish press reports, the couple was well aware of the dangers in Dagestan, and had signed a document stipulating that no ransom money was to be paid out in the event of a kidnapping, a common practice in the region.

Bogota drug kingpin goes on trial

NEW YORK (AFP) — Jury selection begins Tuesday in the trial of a top Colombian drug kingpin, Justo Pastor Peralan, who is believed to control the cocaine trade in Bogota and the Cauca Valley.

Mr. Peralan, 52, is accused of taking over some of Medellin kingpin Pablo Escobar's smuggling routes after the latter was slain in 1993.

Mr. Peralan is charged with conspiracy to import and distribute narcotics in connection with the 1994 discovery of 274 kilograms of cocaine hidden in the cross beams of a tractor trailer that was found in a Long Island warehouse.

He faces eight charges in connection with his alleged role in smuggling 30 tonnes of cocaine into the United States between 1988 and 1994. He has pleaded innocent on all eight.

Prosecutors, headed by Eduardo Ramos, say that they have video and tape recordings of Mr. Peralan ordering the purchase of materials for cocaine refining laboratories.

Witnesses prepared to testify against him include Guillermo Pallomari, a former treasurer of the Cali cartel who has testified about drug payoffs to Colombian political leaders.

Until March 1996, Mr. Peralan was best known as a prosperous businessman who had worked as a baker and police officer. U.S. drug agents now estimate his fortune at between \$500 million and \$1 billion.

Mr. Peralan fled Colombia for Venezuela because of revelations he had contributed to congressional campaigns in 1989. Both Colombia and the United States asked for him to be extradited, and Venezuela opted to send him to the United States.

Federal Judge Thomas Platt will preside over the court in Unidondale on New York's Long Island, about an hour from New York City. The trial will likely last several weeks, court sources said.

7 feared dead in helicopter crash in Poland

WARSAW (AFP) — A helicopter carrying seven Russian tourists and a Polish pilot crashed into a lake in northern Poland Sunday, killing at least two people, local police said.

Two bodies and one person with serious injuries were recovered from the icy waters of Lake Snardwy in the Mazury region and rescuers said the chances of finding any more survivors were "scant."

The helicopter owned by Grudziadz flying club in northern Poland had been chartered by tourists from Kaliningrad for a sight-seeing flight.

An official at the flying club said the Soviet-made Mi-2 helicopter had been "little used and in good technical condition."

Frogmen have localised the wreck of the helicopter about 500 metres from the lakeshore, at a depth of about 12 metres. They were due to inspect it Monday.

Nigeria urges end to revenge killings on Sierra Leone junta

FREETOWN (AFP) — The commander of the Nigerian-led intervention force here Sunday demanded an end to revenge killings of members of the junta being killed while also warning that looters would be shot.

"There should be no resentment killing, as we have seen many members of the junta being killed," Colonel Maxwell Kobe said in a message broadcast on local radio. "Anyone caught looting or seen looting will be shot on sight."

Well-placed sources added that 250 senior officials in the military junta which seized power in a coup in May last year surrendered to the West African intervention force ECOMOG, which captured Freetown Friday.

One hundred of them were seen being escorted to the high-security prison on Pulumba road here. Several hundred Sierra Leone soldiers have also surrendered and laid down their arms, the sources added.

ECOMOG intends to reinstall President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, a civilian who was elected in democratic elections before he was overthrown in the coup about year later.

Col. Kobe said the week-long "exercise is about to be militarily concluded.

Disarmament is continuing forcefully until there is no rebel left in Sierra Leone."

The leader of the junta, Lieutenant-Colonel Johnny Koroma, was not reported to be among the group of officials. Saturday he told the BBC from a location he said was near Freetown that his forces were still intact and would fight on.

Residents of Freetown were out in the streets undeterred by the sound of explosions in the city centre overnight. Nigeria said Saturday that the entire city was under ECOMOG control.

Witnesses said ECOMOG soldiers were pushing on west of Freetown and had already taken control of the village of Goderich.

"We have met little or no resistance," a Nigerian officer said.

Aid workers in the capital said fighting has killed up to 100 people and wounded 1,000, although exact numbers could not be established because overworked morgue staff were burying the dead as quickly as possible.

The Nigerian commander of the force, Colonel Kobe, has travelled around the city reassuring inhabitants. Meanwhile, warnings have gone out against the pillaging of food stocks already severely depleted by regional sanctions imposed against the junta.

Several people were arrested overnight and Nigerian troops were deployed on the streets to prevent further looting.

Col. Kobe, in his address on the radio, complained that "looting has become the order of the day and this must stop immediately."

"Anyone caught looting or seen looting will be shot on sight. Bearing in mind that if we as loyal citizens go about to loot, it means we are putting ourselves in the same category as the NPFL (National Patriotic Front of Liberia) and other rebels," he said.

Officials expressed concern at the food and health situation with shortages reaching crisis proportions. A bag of rice currently costs 100,000 leones, the equivalent of two months' salary. Civilians have set up roadblocks around the outskirts of the city, searching the few cars on the streets ostensibly for weapons but more probably taking a cut of any supplies they might find.

The highly-disciplined Nigerian troops stood to one side, standing quietly in the shade or cleaning their weapons.

A representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Jean-Luc Metzger, said the situation in the city was totally calm, and that the 4,000 refugees who had sought shelter in the Red Cross compound had left, with only the wounded remaining.

No significant signs of the fighting remained, apart from a few houses destroyed from the air or by shelling. There were no burnt-out cars or traces of hand-to-hand fighting.

The sea-front and the tourist hotels to the west of the city were deserted.

ICRC sources said the eastern town of Bo had been taken by Kamajors, the pro-ECOMOG militias.

ECOMOG seized control of Freetown Friday, ending the eight-month army-led rebellion in Sierra Leone.

The international community has widely welcomed the operation.

4 European missionaries abducted

MADRID (AFP) — Troops loyal to Sierra Leone's ousted military junta have abducted four European missionaries, their order said Sunday.

Two Spaniards, an Italian and an Austrian were kidnapped Saturday at the hospital at Lunsar, around 80 kilometres from the capital Freetown, according to a spokesman for the Spanish order of San Juan de Dios.

One of the Spaniards was receiving treatment at the centre where the three others were working as doctors when they were kidnapped by the Revolutionary United Front, an ally of the deposed junta, the Augustine order said.

Another Spanish missionary was able to flee with four African members of the same order.

The four who were kidnapped were identified as Spaniards Fernando Aguilo and Jose Luis Grayon, Italian Gilberto Ugolini and Austrian Joseph Erhard.

The Spanish and Italian foreign ministries earlier confirmed the three missionaries working as doctors had been kidnapped.

The missions had several months ago declined offers to be evacuated.

The Nigerian-led West African intervention force, ECOMOG, seized control of the Sierra Leonean capital Freetown on Friday, ending the eight-month army-led rebellion in the capital of the West African country.

New studies show teens susceptible to smoking advertising

CHICAGO (AFP) — Teenagers appear extremely vulnerable to cigarette advertising, with perhaps one-third of experimentation attributable to tobacco promotions, according to a study to be released Tuesday.

Even if a teenager has no intention of becoming a smoker, tobacco advertising and promotional gimmicks led to 34 per cent of experimentation in California, according to the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) out Feb. 18.

Researchers based their findings on interviews conducted with California adolescents in 1993 and again in 1996.

A separate study in JAMA appearing Tuesday found that magazines with a large number of youth readers were more likely to contain ads for cigarette brands popular among young adolescents.

"Our findings provide new evidence that cigarette advertising in magazines is correlated with youth readership, and that this relationship is different for youth and adult cigarettes," the study's authors said.

Identified as "youth brands" in the study were cigarettes with a high percentage of young smokers like Marlboro, Kool, Winston, Newport and Camel.

"Adult brands" in the study included Salem, Virginia Slims, Benson and Hedges, Parliament and Merit.

But they said the findings suggest that officials from the industry have not always been straightforward when asserting over the years that they have not targeted youths.

"If the tobacco industry as it claims were only attempting to reach 18- to 24-year olds, one would expect the relationship between advertising and young adult readership to be stronger," the authors said.

"By adding to the evidence that cigarette advertising in magazines is related to youth readership, the results of this study strengthen justification for regulating cigarette advertising in magazines."

Lewinsky's e-mails about president in investigators' hands

WASHINGTON (AFP) — White House sex-and-perjury investigators have electronic mail messages from former White House intern Monica Lewinsky that purport to discuss an affair with the president, news reports said Sunday.

The e-mails, detailing Ms. Lewinsky's highs and lows in her alleged affair with President Bill Clinton, were turned over to independent prosecutor Kenneth Starr by Linda Tripp.

Ms. Lewinsky's former friend and Pentagon colleague, Newsweek said in its issue due out Monday.

The "Big Creep didn't even try to call me on V-Day (Valentine's Day). ... he could have called me last night and didn't. He was out of town," says an e-mail dated Feb. 19, 1997, allegedly sent by Ms. Lewinsky to the Pentagon e-mail system, the weekly magazine reported.

In her conversations with Ms. Tripp, Ms. Lewinsky referred to Mr. Clinton as the "Big Creep" and "the he."

Citing an "informed source," Newsweek says Ms. Lewinsky also told Ms. Tripp she hid in the president's office waiting to perform oral sex after he finished meeting with Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo.

Ms. Lewinsky also complained to Ms. Tripp that the president "doesn't kiss me anymore."

Newsweek quotes Ms. Lewinsky as saying:

Newsweek said Ms. Lewinsky made these confidences to Ms. Tripp, who secretly tape-recorded some of their conversations and delivered the tapes to Mr. Starr.

However, Ms. Lewinsky's lawyer, William Ginsburg, contested the authenticity of the e-mails.

"I'd like to cross-examine Linda Tripp on just how she happened to have hard copies of e-mail and who in fact really did create that e-mail," Mr. Ginsburg said in an interview with the CNN television network.

"I doubt very much that it was Monica Lewinsky."

that agreement. And that is something that's still pending resolution," said Mr. Ginsburg.

Mr. Ginsburg has said that Mr. Starr gave him a written offer for Ms. Lewinsky but then retracted it.

Ms. Lewinsky has returned to Washington from her father's home in Los Angeles but it is not clear when she will appear before the grand jury.

"I think that Monica is actually getting stronger as a result of everything that has occurred. I think she's becoming angry, because I think that she is seeing this process unfold," said Mr. Ginsburg.

"And she herself, as an intelligent lady, is saying, how much more of this do I have to take and how much more of this will be heaped on me before this will be over?"

The grand jury has seen a virtual parade of White House staffers, current and former, testify, as well as Lewinsky's mother, Marcia Lewis.

Ms. Tripp, meanwhile, is living in an FBI "safe house" and "typing up the notes" of the Lewinsky conversations which she will also give Mr. Starr, according to Newsweek.

Mr. Starr is seeking to determine whether Mr. Clinton perjured himself when he stated under oath he had not had a relationship with Ms. Lewinsky, now 24, and that he had not asked her to lie about the affair.

Ms. Lewinsky herself has reportedly said in a sworn statement she did not have a sexual relationship with the president.

Mr. Ginsburg told CNN no date is set for his client to appear before a grand jury deciding whether to bring charges in the case, and he reiterated that negotiations for an immunity deal for Ms. Lewinsky are finished.

"We contend that we have an immunity agreement. We contend that Mr. Starr and his staff have reneged on

'No means no — but only if it's loud and early'

EDMONTON, Canada (AFP) — A provincial appeal court has reignited the "no means no" debate by acquitting a 30-year-old man of sexual assault because the 17-year-old girl did not say it soon enough, news reports said Sunday.

In a two-to-one decision, the Alberta appeals court said the teenager should have made it clear from the start that she was opposed to sex or else risk leaving the impression she was willing.

The controversial case began when Steven Ewanchuk invited the teenager, who was not identified because she is a minor, into his trailer to talk about a possible job.

After agreeing to give him a massage and accept one from him, the teen rejected subsequent sexual overtures — including rubbing her breasts and pelvic area — and left the caravan, the court of this politically conservative town was told.

She said she had agreed to the massages in order to pacify Mr. Ewanchuk and so stop him from going any further.

"What this accused tried to initiate hardly qualifies him for the lasting stigma of a conviction for sexual assault and Alberta's current bullet-train to the penitentiary," Judge John McClung wrote.

The "advances to the complainant were far less criminal than hormonal," Judge McClung wrote.

Judge Ken Moore ruled for acquittal because of the "reasonable doubt" about the teen's willingness or lack of it over the advances.

However, in a dissenting opinion, chief Judge Catherine Fraser wrote the decision undermines the equality of women and goes against new Criminal Code provisions that anyone who takes the initiative in a sexual encounter must be able to prove he or she made reasonable efforts to get sexual consent.

"When a woman says 'no' to unwanted sexual activity, she is not required to give a list of what the 'no' includes," Judge Fraser wrote.

Catherine Hedlin of the local Rape Crisis Centre said the case will be appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada, noting that the decision is "again putting the onus on the victim, rather than on the alleged offender."

1,000 calls to Italian police on AIDS-stricken prostitute

RAVENNA, Italy (AFP) — Italian police received over 1,000 calls Sunday on the case of an AIDS-stricken prostitute who had unprotected sex, just one day after her name and photograph were published throughout the peninsula.

Police in this northern Adriatic town decided to release the photograph of 49-year-old Giuseppina Barbieri to warn her clients of the risks of infection.

Police said they received over 1,000 different calls Sunday on the two helplines they set up for Ms. Barbieri's clients.

Ms. Barbieri, who has been suffering from the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) for two years, was particularly sought-after because she had sex without a condom.

Police estimate that several thousands of people may have been infected through Ms. Barbieri and authorities said a "serious risk of epidemic" exists.

Investigators discovered her address book last month while arresting her pimp and companion, 58-year-old Fernando Pagnani. It contained the names of approximately 100 clients throughout Italy.

Mr. Pagnani and Ms. Barbieri, who is currently in hospital, were accused of "attempting to severely injure people through infection."

The president of the National Police Trade Union (USP), Gianpaolo Tronci, called Sunday for the reopening of brothels, stating that it would assure a health and tax control for prostitutes.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation. Established 1975.
جوردين تايمز يومية عربية سياسية مستقلة تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الاردنية

Chairman of the Board of Directors:
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Director General:
MOHAMMAD AMAD

Editor-in-Chief:
GEORGE S. HAWATMEH

Editorial and advertising offices:
Jordan Press Foundation.

University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman, Jordan.

Telephones: 5684311, 5699634, 5667171, 5603585

Facsimile: 5696183

E-mail: jotimes@go.com.jo

Web Sites: http://accessme.com/JordanTimes/

The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays. Subscription and advertising rates are available from the Jordan Times advertising department.

Double standards for inspection

Saddam Hussein is not the only one stretching the rules, wrote the Guardian newspaper in an editorial published on Feb. 12.

WHO WILL inspect the inspectors? Baghdad has been condemned widely for objecting to the nationalities of some members of the U.N. arms inspection team looking in Iraq for weapons of mass destruction. The argument against allowing such objections is based on the principle that nationality is submerged in service to the U.N. There is also the practical point that, if challenges to individuals were allowed, this would open the door to endless delay and provide the target of inspection with a very useful means of dragging out the process — perhaps while vital evidence is concealed.

All this seems reasonable enough. Yet as the report we carry from Washington indicates today, the issue is not quite so simple either in principle or practice. The Chemical Weapons Convention, which the U.S. finally ratified last spring just before the deadline, is based on the principle that inspection will not be resisted, though it does allow for objection to individual inspectors on the list of qualified experts to be made under certain conditions. This is not just a theoretical option. The U.S. has already struck out the names of Cuban and Iranian nationals from an inspection team due to visit U.S. chemical weapons facilities. Washington may of course regard such inspectors as hostile to its interests — but that is precisely the same argument used by Baghdad about the preponderance of U.S. — and British — inspectors on the team now in dispute. The Senate has empowered the president to go even further, approving an act which would allow him to deny any request to inspect a facility on the grounds that such inspection may pose a threat to national security interests. Again, this is not so different from the right claimed by Saddam Hussein to exclude certain installations.

On the issue of biological weapons inspection under the 1972 Convention, President Clinton in his State of Union message last month announced new proposals to strengthen enforcement and inspection under the treaty. This was clearly linked to the pressures created by the Iraq crisis. But administration officials have explained that the new U.S. proposal does not allow for unconditional routine or random inspections. It is no secret that both the Defence and Commerce Department have been resisting measures which they regard as too "intrusive." Apart from considerations of defence secrecy, there has also been strong pressure from the U.S. pharmaceutical lobby to protect it from outside scrutiny.

It may be argued that these situations are not comparable. Saddam Hussein is resisting inspection under U.N. resolutions imposed on Iraq as the result of his own act of aggression. The problems with U.S. treaty implementation are different in kind. This is not a sufficient reply. Even if the question of principle is discounted, the impression remains of double standards being applied. And, it is particularly strong where it does most damage — in the Middle East.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Arab Al Yawm's Mohammad Subeichi called for the creation of a popular committee to arrange for and provide help to the Iraqi citizens stranded in Jordan. This committee should group representatives of the industrial and commercial sectors in addition to political parties and trade unions, and its work should be complementary to that of the popular committee for solidarity with Iraq in the face of the American threats and the U.N. sanctions, said the writer. He said if demonstrations expressing support for the Iraqis are banned, a popular committee that cares for the Iraqis should at least undertake the task of providing relief for the Iraqis who are living in Jordan in misery and want. The writer said that such committee's work will be more appreciated than demonstrations and street protests and more useful than cursing Washington and the powers aligned behind the U.S.

Al Ra'i's Fahed Fanek criticised Jordan Television (JTV) for taking the side of the Americans and projecting Washington's views concerning the current crisis with Iraq. The writer said JTV was totally biased towards Iraq in the first U.S.-led war on Iraq, and today JTV is totally biased towards Washington in the present preparations for war against Iraq. JTV should not refer to the crisis as one between Iraq and the U.N. because it is indeed a crisis between Iraq and the U.S. which is at odds with other members of the U.N. Security Council over this issue, Dr. Fanek said. Referring to last Friday's protests at the mosque in downtown Amman, the writer said the director of JTV appeared on the screen to tell viewers that the CNN report about the incident was untrue and that the crowds were not gathered in a protest march against the U.S. but were worshippers at the mosque and that the stores were closed not because merchants were on strike in a show of protest against the U.S. but rather because it was Friday, the country's weekly holiday. The writer asked why the Jordan television director should volunteer to go on camera in this manner, does he want to tell the world that the Jordanians do not oppose a military strike against Baghdad? According to Dr. Fanek, Jordan Television is called on to remain neutral under all circumstances.

The View from Fourth Circle

The ongoing Arab challenge: freedom vs. security

By Rami G. Khouri

THE DECISIONS by the governments of Palestine and Jordan last week to ban public marches or demonstrations against a possible Anglo-American military strike on Iraq predictably sparked attempts by some groups in both lands to hold street demonstrations and marches. After the midday prayers in Amman last Friday police broke up an attempted march through the downtown area, and both government and opposition personalities ever since have passionately debated the merits or otherwise of what happened.

Such state-ordered bans on demonstrations encapsulate a central, ongoing issue that has — along with socio-economic development — defined the modern Arab World for much of this century: finding the appropriate and workable balance between security and freedom, between the collective right of national security and stability as defined by the state and the personal right to express emotional and political sentiments as defined by the Arab individual.

Nobody questions the two basic rights involved in this issue: the constitutional, legal or moral 'right' and obligation of the state to take unilateral actions to protect the well-being of the realm, and the opposition's right to express a dissenting opinion. The more difficult question is whether the actions of the modern Arab state and the opposition were politically the most constructive and productive course available. One wonders: are Jordan and Palestine stronger or weaker polities this week because their governments banned street marches and subsequently some of their people defied those bans?

The context is complex. Jordan and Palestine are both experiencing historic political evolution, democratisation and modernisation, into which the Anglo-American-Iraqi confrontation injects a highly explosive mix of intense emotions, bitter historical memories, and high-stakes possible consequences. How best to deal with the situation?

Jordan's domestic experience during the 1990-1991 Gulf crisis and war provides valuable lessons. The most important, in my view, is that security and unity are usually enhanced, not threatened, by the democratic fostering

of free expression of opinion and by parallel consultations among all forces in society. We weathered the 1991 Gulf crisis without violence and with significant domestic solidarity, because of the combination of two forces that should be seen, in retrospect, as exemplary in modern Arab political history: the first was the capacity of the citizenry to express itself, even though its expressions often differed from and were far more extreme than the government's position; the second was the active attempt by the state and royal leadership to liberate Kuwait via diplomatic means that honoured all United Nations resolutions. I do not recall a period in modern history when Jordan experienced such domestic confidence, solidarity and strength in the face of an unprecedented combination of domestic political emotionalism, regional tension, economic distress, demographic strains, historical angst, and conflicting international pressures, i.e., security is maximised by maximising freedom and respect for the right of the Arab citizen to express his or her opinion.

When times are tense, this principle becomes more important, not less important, yet the Arab state rightly must prevent possible hostile forces that would take advantage of expanding political freedoms to foster unrest. How can the responsibilities of state and the rights of citizenship be reconciled in a manner that validates and satisfies both? I would suggest the following principles for discussion by both state and opposition:

1. Government and opposition must collectively map out the logistical and legal landscape of protest and pluralism. Peaceful marches, rallies, and speeches should be allowed to take place in a manner that maximises the demonstrators' responsibility for ensuring peace and security. The opposition has the right to express its opinion, but the public also has the right to know that such expression of opinion will not be exploited by some for malicious ends. Closer consultations among the political elite could root out those forces that the state has identified as potential trouble-makers and instigators of violent unrest. If there is convincing evidence of such hostile elements, they can be pre-empted by legal means before

doing their dirty deeds on the streets.

2. All parties should make more use of the law and the judicial system. The state and opposition both say the Constitution provides their legal and moral right to act as they do, yet both also display a peculiar reluctance to test those rights in Jordanian courts. The state would be wise to resort to parliament and the courts for consultation, and/or legal authority to restrict public demonstrations, should overriding national security needs be clear and well communicated to the citizenry — in which case popular support for temporary restrictions on freedom of expression would be very strong and sincere. The opposition, for its part, would be more credible and effective if it challenged the state through legal and political means before resorting to defying the law on the streets.

3. The nature, value, and impact of political dissent must be subjected to and enjoy a national consensus in Arab countries, while being respectful of the majority will — so that dissent becomes both an institutionalised fact of national life and a contributor to national security. The political landscape must be able to accommodate reasonable, pre-emptive government actions and opposition dissent in a more relaxed manner. Arab political culture that now includes parliaments, political parties, mass media, electronic communication, and other modern tools seems peculiarly stuck on the colonial-era tradition of either promoting or preventing street demonstrations. More effective means of dissent need to be adopted and accepted in Arab lands.

The primary protagonists in the current confrontation in the Gulf — Iraq, the United States and the United Kingdom — offer spectacularly different models of political culture. Their assorted strengths, weaknesses or excesses should not spur the rest of us into irresponsible behaviour. Their frenzy should not be our frenzy. The elusive Arab quest for appropriate balance between freedom and security goes on. It will remain the larger question that will challenge us when this latest crisis in the Gulf is over.

The drums of war

By Robert Fisk

I HAVE been reminded of some familiar odours these past few days. The first is the terrible, nauseous stench I endured for hours on the overnight train from Ahwaz to Tehran back in the eighties, as I shared a carriage with dozens of young Iranian soldiers. All of them were coughing up Saddam Hussein's poisons from their lungs into blood-red swabs and bandages. And the mustard gas that was slowly killing them permeated the whole great 20-carriage train as it thundered up from the desert battlefields of the first Gulf war, through the mountains, to the city where almost all these men would soon die and be buried. After only an hour into the journey, I was forced to throw open the carriage window to avoid vomiting.

No sooner had I filed a series of reports to London on this new and terrible war crime of Saddam Hussein than a British diplomat, lunching with one of my editors in London, remarked that "Bob doesn't seem to understand the situation." True, he said, gas was a terrible weapon. But Saddam was fighting the West's war against Iranian fundamentalism — a danger which might set the whole Middle East ablaze and which could threaten the entire world. Wasn't The Times — the paper for which I then worked — putting a little too much emphasis on Saddam's sins?

So the other smell I recall this week is the stink of hypocrisy when — in 1990 — the world's statesmen began to whip their people into line for war against the man they had supported in his conflict against Iran. The French had sold Saddam Mirage jets. The Germans had provided him with the gas that had almost wrecked on the train from Ahwaz. The Americans had sold him helicopters for spraying crops with pesticide (the "crops," of course, being

human beings). The British gave Saddam Bailey bridges. And I later met the Cologne arms dealer who flew from the Pentagon to Baghdad with U.S. satellite photos of the Iranian front lines — to help Saddam kill more Iranians.

And oddly enough, whenever I mentioned this back in 1990, after Saddam had invaded Kuwait, I was admonished by diplomats. There's no point in dwelling on the past, I was told. The only way to deal with Saddam now was war. Did I have any better ideas? And within a few weeks, Saddam — and yes, he is a venal, cruel, wicked, evil man — was being transformed into the Hitler of Iraq, just as the Israelis had called Yasser Arafat the Hitler of Beirut in 1982, and just as Eden had called Nasser the Mussolini of the Nile in 1956. Normally quite rational individuals became cheerleaders for war, shouting hysterically when I suggested that the results of this war might not quite match the expectations. Serious newspapers began to advocate the occupation of Baghdad and a war crimes trial for Saddam.

And once that battle was over and Saddam was expelled from Kuwait, we were told by our leaders that Saddam had been "defanged." Our smart bombs and guided missiles had destroyed his army, our Patriot missiles had protected us from his Scuds — and at little cost to the Western alliance. Then it turned out that all this was untrue. But at least we never claimed then that he was capable of harming more than the Middle East.

So what madness is seizing Messrs Clinton and Blair today? After seven years of inspections — seven years, for heaven's sake — U.N. arms inspectors have not been able to find all of Saddam's weapons of mass destruction. Thousands were dying of malnutrition and lack of medicine, a million if you believe some U.N. officials.

Mass funerals for babies (70 in one cortege on the last count) made their way through Baghdad. Propaganda for the odious Saddam, of course; but few thought the coffins were empty. And then Saddam — shrewdly appreciating that America's craven surrender to Israel's settlement building had convinced Arab leaders that the "peace process" was a betrayal of the Palestinians — decided to ban the U.N. inspectors from his palaces.

And what happened? Our masters informed us that Saddam was even worse than he was before we beat him the first time. Far from just threatening the oil rich Gulf, the chief U.N. inspector informed us that the Iraqis had enough anthrax "to wipe out Tel Aviv" (note the city he chose — not Dhahran or Riyadh but Tel Aviv, although all three had been rocketed in 1991). And then our own trustworthy Foreign Office announced that Saddam now posed a threat to "the whole world." In Washington, Mr. Blair repeated this, saying that he had enough weapons "to wipe out the world's population."

The whole world? Is this true? In Beirut these past few days, I have been trying to remember where I last heard these words. It took me some time before I recalled where. I last read them when I was at school, reading the Eagle comic, wherein a space hero called Dan Dare — a kind of 1950s version of Tom Cruise — would regularly do battle with the Mekon, a green and ectoplasmic alien creature who had the ability to wipe out the entire world (unless he was first destroyed/defanged/put back into his box or whatever). Has it really descended to this? The Middle East, with all its complexities and dangers and religious tension — yes, and its evils — is being turned into a comic strip in which Dan Dare will launch his space-age high-tech at the Mekon of Baghdad.

Perhaps the American public and its pro-Israeli representatives in Congress and the Senate accept this nonsense? But do we, whose prime minister is chanting all this at Bill Clinton's side? British readers should be aware of what U.S. columnists are demanding. In The New York Times, William Safire has been recommending "sustained bombing of all suspected weaponry sites, including palaces occupied by civilians used as hostages," while in The Washington Post, Richard Cohen has been saying of Saddam: "He is not... a mole but a rat. It would be best to exterminate him..." And last weekend, when I recalled the 1991 war and its rhetoric to an American radio commentator, I heard the same weary response, "Let's not talk about the past, Bob. What do we do now?"

Well, the world might, after all, demand that all Middle Eastern states apply all U.N. Security Council resolutions — which include an Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab land as well as the disarming of Saddam Hussein. It could insist that within five years, all weapons of mass destruction in the region — not just Iraqi weapons but Syrian missiles and Israeli nuclear weapons and possible Iranian rockets — be destroyed. It could offer a real peace in the Middle East, based on human rights, justice and a Palestinian homeland.

But no, like Dan Dare we prefer to do battle with monsters. And we are beating the old 1991 drums of war, our claims so preposterous that they bury the real viciousness of the real Saddam. For war is not primarily about victory or defeat. It is about death. It represents the total failure of the human spirit. And if we really are going to participate in this obscenity again, is it not possible to do so with the humility of men who know what we are doing?

The Independent

No press coverage

To the editor:

IT IS impossible to standby and not speak out against the coming monstrosity that will be perpetrated against the Iraqi people sometime after Feb. 17. The published "timeline" in the U.S. now says from Feb. 23 to the start of Hajj. How many of our people are we Muslims going to sacrifice before we get the point of the Prophet's warning — stay unified. Most of our African American brothers here in the U.S. have spoken out in no uncertain terms against the coming action by the U.S. But no press coverage.

The U.S. itself has laws preventing access to its own emporiums of biological horror by any international agency, unless accompanied by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. But of course, it is the 800 pound gorilla on the scene. So what it says of Iraq is a double standard. But no press coverage.

There have already been several demonstrations in the streets of various U.S. cities against the upcoming bombing. And there will be more. Insha-Allah, planned between Feb. 17 and Feb. 28. Thousands of people will be there at various U.S. facilities. But there will be no press coverage.

The reason is that this campaign has been in place for at least the last three months, and nothing is to stop it — not Russia, not Europe, and certainly not the Middle East or the Muslims. It is not that the U.S. is against dictators — it supports some of the worst in the world. As long as they provide cheap labour and cheap land on which to build cheap factories for the multinational corporations. As a highly placed U.S. official said in private lately, Saddam could lay down and agree to all conditions, and that would not delay the bombing one minute. And no press coverage.

Saddam is not the problem. The U.S. attitude is. It does not pay its debt to the U.N., but continues to control it. That's what you do when you are an arrogant, unprincipled,

pled, 800 pound gorilla. After the murder of Panama, all was quiet on the Central and South American front. Now it is the turn of the Middle East. But not Israel. It does not have to obey anything. It is the designated U.S. representative in the region. But no press coverage.

S. B. Cassidy

Riverside Middle East Research Project
Riverside, California

A merging solution

To the editor:

WITH REFERENCE to the recent and ongoing controversy regarding the establishment of Chambers of Industry in various parts of Jordan (J.T., Jan. 27, Feb. 5-6, and Feb. 10, 1998) it seems to the casual observer of the alleged general state of affairs of our elected private sector institutions, namely the Amman Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Jordanian Chambers of Commerce and the Amman Chamber of Industry, that the time is right to introduce major reforms within these institutions. Suggested solutions to end this controversy and introduce reforms at the same time would be: Merge all the existing chambers and establish a chamber of trade and industry in the various areas as required; establish a federation of Jordanian chambers of trade and industry representing the individual chambers; and introduce new election procedures and/or reform the existing regulations to better reflect the needs, requirements and representation of the various sectors in a fair and

LETTERS

equitable manner.

It is appreciated that implementing such a solution is no easy task. It necessitates discussing the issue with an open mind and forward thinking, while discarding personal differences coupled with substantial legislative and institutional efforts from all those concerned.

Vatche G. Dakessian
Amman

Target U.S. policy makers

To the editor:

I AM wondering if any of your excellent editorials make it to the corridors of power in America. For instance, the editorial headlined "Reaching a point of no return" (Jordan Times, Feb. 10) is the kind of balanced, intelligent writing that should be read by lawmakers in America — particularly many of the right-wing fanatics in the Congress.

I know that the White House can be reached directly by e-mail, and I myself use this frequently to make my ideas known about American policy in the Middle East.

I am not sure who reads it, but they always assure you that someone does (probably some lower bureaucrat). I know that people like Dr. James Zogby have direct access to the White House, but I would like to encourage channels like the Jordan Times to make their ideas clearly known to policy makers in America, whom otherwise are uninformed about the realities of the Middle East.

Bob Robertson
Amman

Jordan weighs its options caught between crisis to the east and west of its borders

(Continued from page 1)

continue to receive American and European assistance, but foreign direct investment, a major component of its restructuring strategy, will not witness any increase in current levels if the political risk in the region remains high.

"A massive strike against Iraq could also jeopardise Jordan's economic growth," said a leading economist. "It could lead to disruption of oil supplies and slow-down in the growth of the leading sectors of the economy."

Despite cool relations with the Iraqi regime, economic interests have forced both countries to continue to deal with each other. Politicians fear a scenario where Jordan is forced to seek alternative supplies of oil at market prices to be paid in foreign currency, which is not the case now.

Jordan receives the bulk of its oil needs from Iraq in exchange for Jordanian exports.

A disruption of oil supplies and a closure of the Iraqi market would have multiplying effect, slowing down economic growth and making it difficult to meet earmarked deficit reduction targets. Jordanian factories and industries, including the transport sector, would suffer.

Jordan's exports to Iraq, according to the annual protocol, amount to nearly JD250 million.

"If the Iraqi market closes for any extended length of time, we will be more desperate to export to the West Bank," said the economist. "This will not be possible unless there is Israeli-Palestinian consent on this issue and this will not happen without progress on the negotiations track." Jordan exports a mere JD25 million to the West Bank, mainly cement and building materials.

What complicates Jordan's political dilemma further is that the democratisation process has opened up the country to different, often competing, political groups and lobbies. Throughout the Iran-Iraq war, Baghdad cultivated many Jordanian politicians and intellectuals, as well as businesses and companies, almost totally dominating Jordanian public opinion. The backing Jordan gave to Iraq against Iran, served as a political cover for the growing Iraqi influence in the Kingdom. Palestinian groups, such as the Democratic and the Popular Fronts for the Liberation of Palestine, set up offshoot political parties legally registered in Jordan. The two branches of the Arab

Baath Nationalist Party in Baghdad and Damascus also have offshoots in the country.

Also on the Palestinian side, the Islamic Resistance Group, Hamas, competes openly and challenges the PLO and the Kingdom's recognition of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

Israel has accused Hamas representatives in Jordan of orchestrating suicide attacks inside Israel. The PNA has many times blamed Palestinian groups based abroad of fermenting violence and has asked the Jordanian government to rein in their activities.

Recently, suspected Iraqi-Iraqi violence in Amman has raised concern in official circles that Jordan must reassess its internal security policies. A large number of Iraqi refugees, as well as Egyptian and Syrian workers, have caused an increase in the crime rate, particularly the type of violent crimes previously rare in the country.

"Jordan should not allow itself to be Lebanonised in any manner," said a political analyst. "Strategically, Jordan should not allow itself to serve as a base for any group so as not to limit its political

manoeuvring capability with Arab states."

Others disagree, saying that allowing such groups to operate in Jordan gives the Kingdom leverage in dealing with its neighbours and the ability to influence events. But they admit it is a delicate balancing act.

While very few believe that Jordan or any other Arab country could influence American policy regarding Iraq, many believe that Jordan should redefine its relationship with Israel, without abrogating its peace treaty.

"Jordan should distance itself from Israel and return to its traditional role where it could talk and influence countries in the region," the political analyst said. "This is very difficult but not impossible."

With the peace process faltering and the crisis in Iraq escalating, Jordan appears to be left with no other option but to pursue damage-control policies until the crises abate.

"In the short-term, we just have to lay low, insulate ourselves as much as possible, and... hope for the best," a leading politician concluded. "In the long-term, we need to establish new strategies."

Arab peoples frustrated by U.N. 'duality' in enforcing international legitimacy in region — Prince Hassan

(Continued from page 1)

Q: Jordanian businessmen I talked with fear a military strike against Iraq could seriously hurt Jordan's economy. Why?

A: It would have a direct effect on the region as a whole. Investment and tourism would clearly be hit. Exports to Iraq today represent \$255 million, which is approximately 50 per cent of our exports, and our industries are only

working at 55 per cent capacity. Jordan offers the private investor one of the most favourable commercial policy regimes in the Middle East. But of course, where does it all fall down? On the possibility of regional instability.

Q: What is the endgame with Iraq?

A: You have to look at an interim period. You have to look at the [social] contract between Kurds, Sunni

Arabs and Shiite Arabs. You have to look at [fostering] pluralism.

Q: You're saying you must look at a post-Saddam scenario?

A: If that's the ultimate objective.

Q: If Saddam sees the same scenario, perhaps he's thinking he has nothing to gain by complying with the U.N. weapons inspections and would

rather keep whatever weapons he still has?

A: That's quite right.

Q: The King recently underwent medical tests in England. How is his health?

A: Well, I left him a couple hours ago and he looked fine to me. He's in good health, but my brother likes to let people be aware of what the score is.

More than 200 dead in Taiwan plane crash

(Continued from page 1)

time, about one kilometre from the airport.

"The government and the whole country is shocked and saddened," Mr. Chen said, adding a "very high level taskforce" had been set up to handle the disaster.

Among those on board Flight 676 was Taiwan's Central Bank Governor Shu Yuan-Dong, his wife and several other high-ranking financial officials, as well as several foreigners. Sheu had attended a regional central bank meeting in Bali on Asia's financial crisis at the weekend.

"I heard an deafening explosion and then I saw the airplane smash several houses including that of my uncle. It then became a sea of fire... really like hell," a witness told AFP.

A grim-faced Taiwanese Premier Vincent Siew expressed "deep condo-

lences" to families of the victims and demanded a thorough investigation.

Distraught and weeping relatives waited at the airport for news.

"The Flight 676 captain asked for a second landing after the first one failed in heavy fog and it had lost contact with us since," airline deputy chairman, Hsu Kuo-Chien, told reporters.

Civil Aeronautics Administration Director Tsai Tui, who has offered his resignation, said the flight data and cockpit voice recorders had been found and experts from France, where Airbus aircraft are assembled, would help determine the cause of the accident.

"I am deeply saddened by the disaster. No matter what caused the accident, I have to shoulder my share of responsibility," Mr. Tsai said.

The seven-year-old plane chopped through two electricity poles and felled

trees before smashing into the houses along a four-lane road near Chiang Kai-Shek International Airport at Taoyuan north of the capital. Two or three of the homes were destroyed while all suffered fire damage.

Most of the wreckage was concentrated in a 100-square-metre area and the ground was littered with mutilated and charred bodies, clothing and pieces of luggage. Firefighters in silver uniforms covered the scene with thousands of litres of foam.

Officials said a 10-year-old boy found alive in one of several buildings set ablaze in the crash later died in a nearby hospital.

Another child from one of the damaged homes was found three hours after the crash and rushed to hospital. Taiwan television reported flames and smoke from the burning aircraft and houses were visible some

kilometres away despite fog.

On the highway leading to the airport, rescue workers were seen putting parts of charred bodies into bags. Blood, mangled bodies and twisted wreckage covered the highway for two kilometres and the area was cordoned off by police.

Mr. Chen said the government was "deeply shocked" over the death of Sheu and his wife. "Our government will continue the bank's policies to stabilise Taiwan's foreign exchange market and other financial operations," he said.

It was Asia's second aviation disaster in a month. An airliner carrying 104 passengers and crew crashed into a mountain on the southern Philippines island of Mindanao in early February, killing all on board in that country's worst aviation disaster.

Annan awaits U.S. green light while Australian troops join Gulf build-up

(Continued from page 1)

will travel to Baghdad if the five permanent members of the Security Council — Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States — agree on a "workable" formula that he could take with him.

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said an Annan mission would be the "last hope" to resolve the crisis peacefully.

A strike on Iraq by the U.S. backed by Britain would have "very serious consequences" on the region as well as for Washington and London, he warned.

In Beirut, Mr. Sahhaf called Monday on Arab countries, particularly Kuwait, not to allow their territory to be used as a "launching pad" for attacks against Iraq.

"We are neither threatening nor expressing a wish. On the contrary, we are asking our brothers, including the Kuwaitis, not to be a launching pad for arms that risk killing Iraqi women and children," Mr. Sahhaf said.

"Whoever is now opening his land to the Americans to shed the blood of Iraqi women and children will have to bear the consequences of his crime," he added after a meeting with his Lebanese counterpart Fares Bweiz.

Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeni Primakov, whose country has been at the centre of mediation with Iraq, said during a visit to Athens that time has not run out for a diplomatic solution.

In response to the Russian and French efforts, Baghdad has agreed to open up eight so-called presidential sites from which U.N. arms inspectors searching for weapons of mass destruction have been barred since last October.

But it says the inspections should only take up to 60 days, and is opposed to them being carried out by the U.N.

Special Commission (UNSCOM) charged with dismantling Iraq.

A French proposal calls for a special regime for the inspections of the presidential sites. Britain has rallied behind the proposal, which is also backed by Russia and China, according to the diplomats.

It proposes that the palaces in the presidential site compounds be inspected by teams named by Mr. Annan from the 21 states represented in UNSCOM, which is led by Australian Richard Butler.

Mr. Annan, in a concession to Iraq, has sent a three-member team to Baghdad to resolve a dispute with the United Nations over the boundaries of the presidential sites.

On Monday, the team had lined up "meetings (with Iraqi officials) and places to go," a U.N. source here said, declining to elaborate.

The United Nations says the presidential sites contain 1,500 buildings, a figure contested by Iraq. The total area of the eight disputed sites — spread out over four provinces — is around 75-square kilometres.

China denied Monday it had weakened opposition to a military strike against Iraq following indications from U.S. officials that Beijing might abstain if a vote came up in the Security Council.

"The two sides agreed to three points during talks with U.S. envoy to the United Nations Bill Richardson," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhu Bangzao said on state television.

"Apart from these points, the two sides did not make any other propositions," he added.

The three points agreed were that the situation over Iraq was grave, that Iraq must comply with all relevant Security Council resolutions and grant unfettered access to arms inspectors, and that a diplomatic solu-

tion was the best solution.

On the military front, an elite unit of Australian troops most highly trained soldiers was to leave Tuesday for the Gulf, Australian Prime Minister John Howard announced.

The first group of 190 military personnel will include 110 members of the crack Special Air Service (SAS), who are expected to be deployed in high-risk search and rescue missions for allied pilots downed in missions over Iraq.

The others are intelligence and medical units as well as crew for two Boeing 707 air-to-air refuellers.

New Zealand is also ready to send two surveillance aircraft and a unit of up to 20 special forces commandos to join the U.S.-led coalition threatening to strike Iraq. New Zealand's Prime Minister Jenny Shipley said on Monday.

Ms. Shipley said cabinet had decided the country would stand ready to participate in military action aimed at forcing Iraq to comply with United Nations demands that it abandon production of illegal weapons of mass destruction.

"In the final analysis, New Zealand must be prepared to act in concert with others to uphold and if necessary enforce international peace and security," she said.

"By committing our support to the coalition, we hope that will be a small but significant gesture," she added.

Kuwait, where the United States has based six radar-evading Stealth fighters, has agreed to the deployment of U.S. and British bombers while a Bahraini air base is also being used for a possible air assault on Iraq.

On Sunday, another six U.S. Stealth planes were sent to the region. Most of the U.S. assets for an attack are based on two aircraft carriers in the Gulf, Saudi Arabia, where the

U.S. air force has more than 100 planes, has refused to allow its soil to be used to fly combat missions against Iraq. Chinese President Jiang Zemin

Monday renewed his country's opposition to military action, while his Foreign Minister Qian Qichen said the world consensus was in favour of a diplomatic solution.

Meanwhile, several Russian opposition legislators have decided to remain in Baghdad to act as a "human shield" against a possible U.S.-British attack.

Alexei Mitrofanov, a lawmaker for the ultra-nationalist Liberal Democratic Party, said party leader Vladimir Zhirinovskiy would return to Moscow Tuesday, but that several other members of the delegation would remain.

Mr. Zhirinovskiy, who arrived with a shipment of humanitarian aid to Iraq on Wednesday, has been outspoken critic of the U.S. position in the crisis.

Jordan sees Israeli probe report on Mossad assassination attempt as a negative sign; Misha'al says he is 'not surprised'

(Continued from page 1)

dan that have cooled dramatically since Mr. Netanyahu took over in June 1996.

Days after the attempt that enraged public opinion, Israel was forced to free Hamas founder Sheikh Ahmad Yassin and up to 70 other Jordanian and Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails to secure the release of the two assassins who were travelling on forged Canadian passports.

Hamas has carried out more than a dozen suicide bombings in Israel since 1994, including two in Jerusalem last year that prompted Mr. Netanyahu to decide to go after the movement leaders.

The inquiry, which was dismissed by Israeli opposition leaders as a whitewash, also found that Mr. Netanyahu acted without flaw in the assassination attempt.

The three-member panel of inquiry, which had been appointed by Mr. Netanyahu, placed

most of the blame on Mossad chief Danny Yatom. But in a 2-1 decision, it said it was up to the prime minister to fire Mr. Yatom.

The attack on Mr. Misha'al weakened Jordanian efforts to boost normalisation with Israel and reaffirmed popular perceptions that the Jewish state remained an enemy that could never be trusted.

Hamas, which maintains a media office in Amman run by Jordanian members, has generally respected Jordanian demands not to engage in anti-Israeli activities that could endanger Jordan's national security.

AP quoted a senior Jordanian official Monday as saying that security cooperation under the 1994 peace treaty would not resume as long as Mr. Yatom remained in office.

"The report was not a surprise to Hamas. It came exactly as we expected it to be," Mr. Misha'al told the Jordan

Times in an interview.

"We are aware of the racist nature of the Zionist entity which is based on terrorism and bloodshed. To consider an attack on a political figure in Jordan as legitimate is a result of the Zionists' terrorist mentality," he added.

"To target Jordan's sovereignty and security, despite the peace treaty with Jordan, is an indication of the deep-rooted terrorist mentality of the Zionists," said Mr. Misha'al.

He said Hamas did not ask for extra security measures for its Amman-based leaders.

"Hamas has no military presence in Jordan. Hamas' existence in Amman is merely a political one," he said.

"They are threatening to hit us in Amman because they failed to challenge Hamas in the occupied territories," Mr. Misha'al added.

The Israeli inquiry panel said that Mr. Yatom had believed that

even if the agents were unable to kill Mr. Misha'al, it would be nearly impossible to detect that an attack had taken place.

Opposition lawmaker Yossi Sarid was quoted by the AP as saying that the probe was flawed because those investigating it were appointed by Mr. Netanyahu himself, rather than the Supreme Court.

"These findings raise the suspicion that the committee, because of who was serving on it, was incapable of acting independently from the man who appointed it," Mr. Sarid said.

The opposition Labour Party also questioned the neutrality of the commission and its failure to criticise even the principle of carrying out an attack on a friendly nation's soil.

"No matter what the motives, an operation in Jordan was not justified," said former Police Minister Moshe Shahal.

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Ministry of Agriculture Projects Directorate Invitation to Tender for the Supply of Fertilizers, Agricultural Machinery for the Project of the Increase of Food Production

The steering committee of the Projects Directorate in the Ministry of Agriculture invites interested Japanese trading firms with representative office or liaison office in Jordan to submit their financial offers for the supply of fertilizer, agricultural machinery, and construction machinery for the project of the increase of food production financed by a grant aid from the government of Japan for the purpose of contributing to the increase of food production in Jordan.

Interested companies can get the tender documents from the Engineering Office in MOA against non-refundable amount of JD100 per one set.

The last date for getting the tender documents is on Monday, the 23rd of February, 1998.

Financial offers should be submitted in two copies to the Engineering Office in MOA not later than 12:00 O'clock local time on Saturday, the 24th of March, 1998.

Mijhim Al Khraisha
Minister of Agriculture
Chairman of the steering committee

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Stalling peace process hinders investment — Anani

AMMAN (J.T.) — Deputy Prime Minister Jawad Anani said Monday that Jordan had pinned great hopes on the 1994 Jordan-Israel peace treaty to yield dividends especially in the area of investments.

Investments in Jordan did not reach the minimum of expectations due to political instability and lack of security in the region. Dr. Anani said at the opening of a Dutch-Jordanian round table meeting designed to explore the investment climate in Jordan and organised by the Investment-Promotion Corporation (IPC) in conjunction with the Netherlands-based Globa Panel.

Dr. Anani who was speaking on behalf of HRH Crown Prince Hassan said that the biggest challenges facing Jordan in the coming century were regional security and stability.

Jordan's national economy depends to a large extent on the Kingdom's economic

relations with the Arab countries, Dr. Anani said.

But, he noted, that over the past seven years the Jordanian economy suffered as a result of poor ties with the Gulf states. Despite the difficulties, however, Jordan succeeded in reducing the volume of its external debt and could get the siege that was imposed on the port of Aqaba following the Gulf war lifted.

Also addressing the meeting was Minister of Trade, Industry and Supply Hani Mulki who attributed progress achieved in the Jordanian economy to the economic reforms programme that the country started in 1989. He said these reforms helped Jordan attain an annual economic growth of 6.6 per cent.

Dr. Mulki said that Jordan is committed to the creation of a pan-Arab free trade zone and pins great hopes on its association agreement with the European Union (EU) to achieve economic progress

and boost its trade.

Dutch Ambassador to Jordan Barnard Tangelder underlined the importance of promoting Jordanian-Dutch economic and trade links. He said such a goal will be boosted through the implementation of the Jordanian-EU association agreement.

The chairman of the Jordanian Businessmen Association (JBA), Hamdi Tabbaa, outlined the main features of the Jordanian economy and pointed out that "several important laws were drafted, enacted or amended to help the economy such as investment promotion, income tax, sales tax, stock market, secured financing, customs, electricity, telecommunications, agents and brokers etc."

He said the government started a privatisation programme aimed at expanding the role of the private sector in the overall economic field.



Deputy Prime Minister Jawad Anani (second right) Monday attends the Dutch-Jordanian round table meeting aimed at exploring the investment climate in the Kingdom. Present also are: Minister of Trade, Industry and Supply Hani Mulki (right), Dutch Ambassador to Jordan Barnard Tangelder (second left) and Chairman of the JBA Hamdi Tabbaa (Petra photo)

Crucial talks to save international investment accord

PARIS (AFP) — Senior officials of the leading industrialised nations began crucial talks here Monday to try to salvage an international investment accord, although key players have already said little short of a miracle can rescue the pact.

Failure to reach agreement by the end-April deadline will be particularly embarrassing for the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), because it has already spent almost three years negotiating the accord, and has extended the deadline once from an original date of May 1997.

The original idea was for the 29 OECD countries to produce an agreement making their markets more open to foreign investment and guaranteeing equal treatment for both domestic and foreign investors.

But the talks have become embroiled in a number of disputes, the most serious of which is an EU-U.S. dispute over U.S. laws on international investment.

The laws allow the U.S. authorities to punish foreign companies with operations in the United States for investing in Libya, Iran or Cuba.

The European Union rejects the principle of such action by the United States for acts outside its own territory, and it is difficult to see how the OECD agreement can be finalised if this problem of jurisdiction is not resolved. OECD officials say.

A further bone of contention is the insistence by France and Canada that they continue to be allowed to protect and subsidise their film industries.

something the U.S. side is fighting strongly.

The agreement was supposed to be presented to OECD ministers at their annual meeting here April 27-28, but the U.S. side is already saying that an agreement is unlikely by then.

"We do not envision signing on to any agreement this April," U.S. Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky said in Washington Friday.

"It is an unbalanced agreement. It is prejudicial in some respects ... It's going to require very substantial, very substantial work."

French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin said meanwhile there would be "no agreement" if the French and European film industries were not given protection from U.S. imports.

OECD officials say this dispute is not insurmountable, noting that the issue has already been resolved in several multilateral trade agreements, but the EU-U.S. dispute over extraterritorial legislation is far more serious.

OECD Secretary General Donald Johnston insisted at a hastily-called press conference Friday that he remained "optimistic" an agreement can be reached by April 29, but offered no evidence of progress on any of the key outstanding issues, saying only they were still under negotiation.

The amounts at stake are enormous — foreign direct investment from OECD member countries totalled some \$259 billion in 1996.

And if the world's richest countries cannot agree on opening up their investment markets, it will be difficult to

persuade the developing countries to do so in the future, analysts say.

U.S. Under Secretary of State Stuart Eizenstat and Deputy USTR Jeffrey Lang said in a statement to Monday's meeting here that "important progress" has been made since negotiations began in 1995.

But a large number of "difficult issues" remain to be resolved, notably calls for wide-ranging exceptions, a reference to the French and Canadian calls for a "cultural exception" for their film industries.

The United States is not against clearly-defined narrow exemptions, but is concerned by proposals for "ambiguous and non-transparent carve-outs," they said, calling for participants to find "creative ways" to resolve outstanding problems.

Other issues still outstanding include labour and environmental standards. There is concern among labour and ecology groups that countries will lower their standards in both areas to attract investment.

Business is meanwhile concerned that a watered-down agreement could offer no real advantages in ease of investment, while imposing tighter labour and environmental constraints on their operations.

Other issues still outstanding include the extent of individual exemptions to be allowed, protection of intellectual property rights, treatment of indirect investment and how to avoid de facto discrimination.

The deputy ministerial talks here Monday and Tuesday are the last such high-level negotiations scheduled before the April meeting.

Thailand and Cambodia to open new permanent border post to boost trade

ARANYAPRATHETH (AFP)

—Thailand and Cambodia are to upgrade their border post here to a permanent crossing later this month in a bid to boost trade and tourism between the crisis-hit neighbours, an official said Monday.

The move comes despite a round of fighting between Cambodia's warring factions in the area in December which sent thousands of refugees flooding over the makeshift

border post.

The crossing, currently only a temporary frontier transit point, links the Thai province of Srakaw and the Cambodian province of Bantei Meanchey and has been the entry point for thousands of Cambodian refugees fleeing into Thailand.

Governor Bhuchong Rungroj said Thai and Cambodian officials had decided Monday to open the post permanently to allow tourists to travel over

Thailand's eastern border into Cambodia for the first time.

The move will also increase cross-border trade between the two neighbours, one of which is being battered by military strife, and the other — Thailand — by Asia's economic firestorm.

Duang Kam, the governor of Bantei Meanchey, said the move would boost ties and increase trade.

He also said the area would be safe for tourists, provided a new round of fighting between the troops of Cambodian strongman Hun Sen and those of his arch rival Prince Norodom Ranariddh did not erupt.

"If there is no fighting, I can guarantee 100 per cent the safety of tourists and traders crossing here," he told reporters.

Marriott holds annual Grand Bonanza Club reception

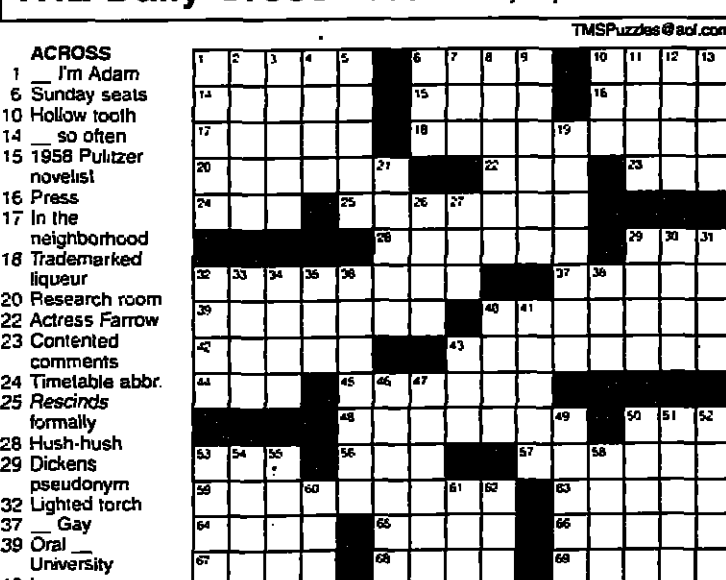


THE ANNUAL reception ceremony for members of the Grand Bonanza Club was held Sunday at the Annam Marriott Hotel where Mr. Marten Stauden, the hotel's general manager, delivered a welcoming speech thanking the club for their cooperation with the hotel. Later on, a lottery drawing took place. The membership of the club is granted only for individuals who use any of the hotel's facilities through which they can accumulate points and receive privileges from the hotel such as free meals, free use of the hotel's facilities and free tickets etc....

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THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

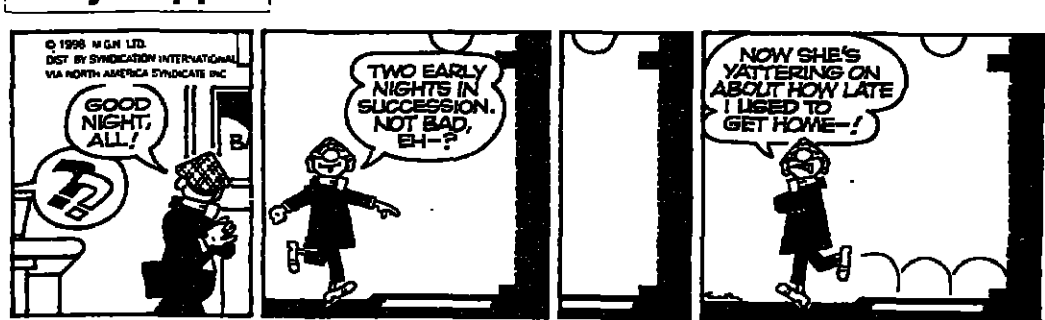


- By Robert Zimmerman
San Diego, CA
- ACROSS**
- 1 I'm Adam
 - 6 Sunday seats
 - 10 Hollow tooth
 - 14 so often
 - 15 1958 Pulitzer novelist
 - 16 Press
 - 17 In the neighborhood
 - 18 Trademarked liqueur
 - 20 Research room
 - 22 Actress Farrow
 - 23 Contented comments
 - 24 Timetable abbr.
 - 25 Rescinds formally
 - 28 Hush-hush
 - 29 Dickens pseudonym
 - 32 Lighted torch
 - 37 Gay
 - 39 Oral
 - 40 University
 - 42 Leap
 - 43 Symbol meaning last
 - 44 Scuba-pioneer
 - 45 Solidify
 - 46 One Wise Man
 - 48 Kansas city
 - 50 False front
 - 53 transit gloria mundi
 - 56 Wish undone
 - 57 Halfway point
 - 59 Bride's clothes
 - 63 "Blow Blues" playwright
 - 64 Out of control
 - 65 Icelandic epic
 - 66 Meat cuts
 - 67 Ticket sales
 - 68 Bleached blonde, e.g.
 - 69 Ms. Lauder
- DOWN**
- 1 toast
 - 2 To have in Le Havre
 - 3 Interior style
 - 4 Asian sea
 - 5 Strong polyester film
 - 6 Campaign contributor, abbr.
 - 7 Me, myself, and I obsession
 - 8 Germany's Republic
 - 9 Doodling
 - 10 Conifer
 - 11 Expanse
 - 12 Ark builder
 - 13 Wildebeests
 - 19 Food evaluators
 - 21 Plague (with)
 - 26 Garden vegetable
 - 27 Collector's French coin
 - 28 Filula or libia
 - 30 Russian saint
 - 31 Actress Pitts
 - 32 Prince in a green suit?
 - 33 Togo's capital
 - 34 Son of Adam
 - 35 Actress Tilly
 - 36 Shift drinks
 - 38 Something to pick?
 - 40 Emulate eagles
 - 41 Jewish holiday
 - 43 Nav. rank
 - 46 Entertained
 - 47 Quick
 - 49 Supermarket passage
 - 50 Own up to
 - 51 Genetic duplicate
 - 52 High-strung
 - 53 Bachelor party
 - 54 "My Friend"
 - 55 Old codger
 - 58 God of Spain
 - 60 Godfrey's instrument
 - 61 Summer time fruit drink
 - 62 Former Midwest nation, abbr.

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) For the last month, your focus has been on group activities. You and your team have been producing amazing results, possibly even creating miracles along the way. Use the experience you've gained in recent weeks to make a decision that will affect the entire group. Take everybody's needs into consideration.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You've been running up against the scientific, analytical types for the last month. They've got the programme all figured out and it's not what you had in mind. Well, that's going to change over the next couple of days. People will be friendlier and much more compliant. So hold out for one more day.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) There are new assignments coming in, and old ones to finish. Somebody you're working with is demanding control of the situation. There are opportunities for you to come up with good ideas, but it may be difficult to implement. Don't worry. You'll be able to get more changes into effect later in the week.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) This is a wonderful day for you and tomorrow should be magnificent. If there's an endeavour you've been thinking about beginning, schedule it for first thing this morning. Travel and romance will be especially well favoured during this phase. If you don't have plans right now, don't worry about it. You will in the next couple of days.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) It's a good time for decisions concerning money, especially money you're borrowing. If you're thinking about getting a loan to buy something for the house, or to buy real estate, go ahead with those plans this morning. There may be difficult getting paperwork signed later on this afternoon, but don't give up.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 21) You're standing off to one side of an argument, waiting to see which way the chips fall. Watch a master negotiator wheel and deal and you'll learn how it's done. Actually, conditions are changing, so the person with all the rules might lose one for a change. Pay attention and comply with those rules. Never hurts to play it safe.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You've got a little time to play, but not much. You should be starting to gear up for a big job ahead. The good news is that you'll also be making more money soon. Although you don't really enjoy working hard, you don't mind making the money. Concentrate on that when the going gets tough.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You have more energy and a better ability to negotiate. That'll come in handy today. If a roommate is still giving you a hard time, hold out a little longer. He or she has had the advantage for the last few weeks, but by tomorrow, you'll see the tide beginning to turn in your favour, and by Thursday it'll definitely be going your way.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Things are more stable than yesterday. Settle down and assimilate the information you've gathered. It's going to be difficult to get past the next barrier. You may just have to wait here a while. This may not be bad. You're learning quickly, but you have to take things in stages. This is a stressful phase, and tomorrow will be, too.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) If you're considering taking a class, one of your best friends has an excellent suggestion. He or she could get you into the right environment. You don't want to waste time learning something you won't use. You want to make a profit on any investment you make, including time and mental energy.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You'll notice a weakening of your influence and a strengthening of another person's power. That person may be in a position to help you out, however. It looks like a good day to ask for a raise, for example. Make this older person an offer he or she can't refuse, and don't wait. PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You're being pushed to finish something you started. It has to do with paperwork, possibly for an education institution. If you're dealing with some big bureaucracy, handle that matter now. Get the chores done so you can get on to something more fun. Have a great time while you're at it.

Birthstone of February: Amethyst — Onyx

THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



"What's the sense of saving for the future? As soon as you get there, it's already the past!"

JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

THYIC

GOWAN

EPTTIE

STRUMI

Print answer here:

Yesterday's Jumbles: LOVER TEASE ANYHOW PIGEON

Answer: What the florist discussed with his accountant — GROWTH PLANS

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

by Henri Arnold and Mike Argilston

The Prince and I go way back

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers tomorrow)

Turkey's Dogu looks to boost country's east region

ISTANBUL (R) — Turkey's Dogu Holding will invest \$50 million in a joint venture food plant to support economic and social development in Turkey's poverty-stricken south-eastern region, its chairman, Mehmet Yildirim, said Monday.

"We brought the first foreign capital to the region," Yildirim told Reuters in an interview.

"In the first phase we began sapling and greenhouse production in a joint venture with Italian (company) Toscana."

"In the second phase, we will build a plant to produce frozen and canned food and tomato paste. It will be completed by the end of 1999 and be primarily export oriented," he said.

Sapling production, established on about 100 hectares (250 acres) of land, would be the factory's major source of fruits and vegetables, Yildirim said.

"We also bought a 20-hectare plot for the factory and are in talks with Dutch, British and Italian companies to set up a joint venture," he added.

He said they were aiming to make local farmers partners in the project, which will eventually employ 5,000 workers.

"We want the farmers and villagers to be the new entrepreneurs in the region."

Exports from southeast Turkey, mainly agricultural and animal products, rose to \$619 million in 1997, up 53 per cent from the previous year.

Dogu Holding was set up in early 1997 by around 50 businessmen, headed by Yildirim who is also chairman of the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce. The aim of the company is to foster development in the east and southeast regions of Turkey to reverse mass migration to industrialised western regions.

A 13-year old conflict between the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) and armed forces has killed more than 26,000 people in the region, and left it lagging the rest of Turkey economically.

The Istanbul-based company also plans to develop tourism opportunities in the region. It will open its first hotel in the town of Diyarbakir in May.

"Developing the tourism sector in the region is crucial. There are businessmen and people who want to come to the region but cannot due to lack of hotels," Yildirim said.

According to a government decree effected on January 23, Turkey provides cheap electricity for manufacturing plants in the region, lower income tax for workers and delays in corporate tax payments.

"The government's new investment incentives package for the east and southeast will also help to develop economic activity in these regions," Yildirim said.

A \$32 billion giant scheme to irrigate 1.7 million hectares (4.2 million acres) of land in eight south-eastern provinces and produce most of the country's energy needs, will become fully operational after the year 2005.

Hong Kong economy vulnerable, but should ride out Asian crisis — IMF

LONDON (AFP) — Hong Kong's economy is fundamentally sound and should be able to ride out the Asian financial crisis, even though it is vulnerable in the short term, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said Monday.

In a report released in London, the IMF said that Hong Kong, a former British colony which returned to Chinese rule as a Special Administrative Region last July, "would respond flexibly to the impact of the regional crisis, as it had responded to adverse shocks in the past."

"The regional crisis significantly clouds the short-term prospects for Hong Kong SAR and exposes it to some vulnerability," the report said.

The IMF "noted that the openness and liquidity of its financial markets meant that Hong Kong SAR remains vulnerable to shifts in investor sentiment."

But Hong Kong's "solid fundamentals and decisive policy actions had helped it withstand the regional financial crisis and the bouts of speculative attack," it said.

It also said the handover of Hong Kong to China seven months ago "had been achieved smoothly" and that investor confidence had been maintained in "the one country, two systems" framework.

"Indeed, the continued uncertainties about the magnitude and duration of the regional slowdown mean that a further reduction in growth cannot be discounted."

However, some easing off in demand was a good thing, the report said, because of fears about inflation, rapid credit growth and labour market tightness.

A correction of these trends will raise Hong Kong's competitiveness, which was damaged by the massive currency depreciations in other regional economies, such as South Korea and Malaysia.

On the whole, Hong Kong's economy is robust, the IMF said.

The regional crisis slowed down growth in the second half of 1997 from about 6.4 per cent in the first half and was expected to hit an average of about 5.25 per cent for the year as a whole.

Unemployment dipped to 2.2 per cent in the third quarter of 1997, compared with 2.6 per cent a year earlier.

Real wage growth rose to 1.7 per cent in the four quarters ending in September, but "price pressures were contained" at 5.2 per cent inflation, down from 6.4 per cent in July, the report said.

The IMF report "expected that higher interest rates and the effects of the regional crisis on trade would contribute to a noticeable slowdown in activity in Hong Kong SAR during 1998."

Saudi markets safe from Iraq crisis — officials

RIYADH (R) — It is business as usual in Saudi Arabian markets despite the current Iraq crisis and any impact from a U.S.-led military strike would be limited, Saudi officials said in remarks published Monday.

"There is an abundance of goods and services in the Saudi market," the London-based Arabic daily Asharq Al-Awsat quoted Saudi Commerce Minister Osama Bin Jaafar Bin Ibrahim Faqih as saying.

Faqih and other Saudi officials and businessmen said the crisis with Iraq had not taken a toll on business despite an escalation of tensions and the prospect of a U.S.-led military strike on Iraq if diplomacy failed to end the standoff over U.N. weapons inspections.

"I don't see any type of concern," Hamed Al-Zail, head of the Saudi Council of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, told Asharq Al-Awsat.

"Even in the event of a military strike, its impact will be very limited. And this was confirmed by past experiences including the (1991) Gulf War... it did not impact the movement of trade," he added.

Oil giant Saudi Arabia is the biggest market in the Gulf.

Zamil added that the latest Iraq crisis had not driven up the insurance rates on sea shipping in the Saudi market and that the kingdom's ports were operating normally.

China, Netherlands sign big petrochem joint venture

THE HAGUE (AFP) — Chinese officials and Royal Dutch/Shell signed a \$4.5 billion deal Monday for a petrochemical plant in Nantai, China's biggest joint venture yet with a foreign partner. The plant, more than four years in the planning, will be built in the southern province of Guangdong. Its main product, when it comes on line around 2003, will be about 800,000 tonnes of ethylene a year.

The signing was the highlight of a four-day visit by Chinese Premier Li Peng, who focused on economic issues in talks with his Dutch counterpart, Wim Kok.

The financial crisis in Asia, the European Monetary Union and the euro were key topics in their talks, along with relations between the European Union and China, Kok said.

Li, on the third day of his visit, told a brief news conference after meeting Kok that they had had a "frank and productive exchange of views" on a range of issues.

Both men were keen to stress that the period of strained relations which dogged Sino-Dutch relations and trade in 1997 had been overcome.

Ties deteriorated sharply last April after the Netherlands, which then held the rotating EU presidency, actively encouraged a motion criticising China at the annual meeting of the United Nations Commission for Human Rights.

"Although" economic issues took precedence during Li's trip, China's human rights record was also broached, with Kok stressing that an "open dialogue" was needed.

The "constructive, political dialogue (that has started) will continue as it is the only way to progress," Kok said.

Economic issues on the agenda included the financial crisis in Asia and "the way China and Europe are trying to limit the damage," Kok said.

The European Monetary Union, the euro and relations between the EU and China were also discussed.

Signalling an improvement in bilateral relations, Li said that Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands had been invited on a state visit to China. He did not specify a date.

The planned visit by the Dutch head of state "illustrates the excellent relations" that now exist between China and the Netherlands, Li said.

China has a "keen desire to further develop good relations between our two countries" and "enhance our cooperation in political, economic and cultural areas," Li stressed.

Economic cooperation between the two countries will be reinforced when Minister for Economic Affairs Hans Wijers and a large delegation of Dutch businessmen travel to Beijing on Saturday for a nine-day visit.

REUTERS • REUTERS • The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar		1.8195	0.6112	1.4632	125.80	1.4444	1794.30	2.0604	6.0970
DE Mark	0.5498		0.3357	0.8041	69.15	0.7935	985.88	1.2658	3.3610
GB Sterling	1.6360	2.9765		2.3910	206.26	2.3630	2935.83	3.3549	9.9769
CH Franc	0.6834	1.2430	0.4174		86.15	0.9866	1225.45	140.10	4.1662
JP Yen	0.0079	1.4417	0.4842	1.1695		1.1448	14.23	162.53	4.8329
CA Dollar	0.6923	1.2479	0.4186	1.0112	1.14		1231.91	1.4069	4.1831
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0129	0.3402	0.8814	1425.72	0.8043			3.3983
NL Guilder	0.4877	88.72	0.2879	71.33	61.45	0.7042	874.85		2.9729
FR Franc	0.1640	0.2983	0.1002	23.9622	20.66	0.2388	33.62	33.6200	

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar		0.7090	3.7505	0.3770	3.6408	0.3066	3.6729	1619.50	3.3960
Jordan Dinar	1.4104		5.2898	0.5317	5.1381	0.4310	5.1804	2143.18	4.7884
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.1890		0.1008	0.97	0.0815	0.98	405.15	0.9052
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8807	9.9485		9.88	0.8106	9.74	4030.81	9.0055
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1947	1.0301	1.0301		0.0839	1.01	417.35	0.9325
Kuwait Dinar	3.2723	2.3200	12.2728	1.2336	11.91		12.02	4972.19	0.9326
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1930	1.0211	1.0206	0.9913	0.0832		413.71	0.9243
Lebanese/1000	0.66	0.4666	2.4662	0.2461	2.3961	0.2011	2.4172		2.2343
Egyptian	0.2946	0.2088	1.1047	0.1110	1.0724	0.0900	1.0819	447.57	

Energy				
Oil	Last	Previous		
Brent	14.10	14.08		
W. Texas	16.00	15.94		
Bonny	14.10	14.08		
Dubai	12.80	12.69		
UL Gas	160.00	160.00		

Metal Prices				
Metal	288	Offer		
Gold (oz's)	288	298.5		
Silver (oz's)	7.05	7.1		
Platinum (oz's)	385	387		
AL (3 Months)	1498	1499		
CU (3 Months)	1490	1491		
Zinc (3 Months)	1056	1058		
Lead (3 Months)	619.5	620.5		
NI (3 Months)	6505	6510		

Energy				
Commodity	Last	Delivery		
Coffee (c/lbs)	170.08	Spot		
Cocoa (\$/ton)	1590	Spot		
Sugar (\$/ton)	284.5	Spot		
Wheat (\$/ton)	0	Spot		
Soya (c/lbs)	26.29	Spot		
Tea (c/lbs/kg)	198	Spot		
Barley (\$/bsh)	0	Spot		
Rice (\$/ton)	400	Spot		

JOD Cross Rates				
Currency	Buy	Sell		
US Dollar	0.708	0.710		
GB Sterling	1.1989	1.1997		
DE Mark	0.3383	0.3392		
CH Franc	0.4834	0.4858		
FR Franc	0.1168	0.1164		
JP Yen	0.6006	0.6034		
NL Guilder	0.3448	0.3463		
IT Lira	0.3935	0.3955		

ASIAN FINANCIAL MARKET									
HOUSING BANK CENTRAL AMMAN - SHARJAH									
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR MONDAY 16/02/1998									
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	PAST 12 MONTHS LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P/E	DIV.	NO. OF SHARES	NO. OF TRADED	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE
346,000	250,000	ARAB BANK	15.0	1.23	10	2860	924260	327.00	326.00
12,340	1,080	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	8	0.00	4	1120	1914	1.73	1.74
5,800	3,300	CAIRO AMMAN BANK	6.8	4.95	1	3800	12502	3.30	3.29
3,540	1,370	BANK OF JORDAN	4.4	0.00	1	3800	11400	3.00	3.00
1,300	890	MID. EAST. INV. BK.	66.1	0.00	1	4500	6255	1.39	1.39
2,680	1,650	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	10.1	6.21	3	1250	2100	1.68	1.68
5,300	4,410	THE HOUSING BK.	29.8	1.95	4	7850	39236	5.00	4.98
4,180	1,850	JOR. INVEST. BANK	10.1	0.00	11	3323	17.5	1.94	1.94
960	620	JOR. GULF BANK	4.3	9.72	35	48300	34557	70	72
4,020	1,990	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	10.6	4.59	30	19725	40147	1.99	2.05
1,530	1,020	UNION BK. SAV. INV.	9	0.00	1	100	103	1.02	1.03
BANK SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 229.21 %CHG: -0.15									
2,350	2,150	GENERAL ARAB INSUR.	22.9	4.35	2	828	1904	2.20	2.30
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 120.69 %CHG: 0.00									
2,050	1,550	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	9.0	5.05	17	19250	37829	1.94	1.98
7,500	3,750	VEHICLES, CHARIERS FED.	3.85	1	1	100	454	4.56	4.54
1,550	930	NATL. PORTFOLIO	9	0.00	4	3250	3218	98	99
4,000	2,890	ARAB INTL. INV. EDUC.	10.2	0.00	4	1150	4488	3.90	3.92
1,090	500	ZAKA EDUCATION	9	0.00	1	50	46	92	92
2,130	1,630	UNITED CO.	7.9	6.59	2	450	752	1.59	1.57
830	600	UNION LAND DEV.	9	0.00	2	500	300	60	60
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 115.56 %CHG: +0.51									
4,450	2,710	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	18.1	4.09	16	5464	14849	2.72	2.69
11,340	3,240	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	9.8	8.80	7	1300	13124	10.07	10.10
2,800	1,280	INDUSTRIAL COM. AG.	9	0.00	3	580	777	1.28	1.34
4,720	3,440	ARAB PHARM.	12.8	4.30	15	11401	52822	4.63	4.65
2,940	2,200	JORDAN DAIRY	9.7	8.52	3	1216	3489	2.85	2.87
6,000	4,400	ARAB ALUMIN. CO.	14.2	4.31	11	1642	1642	5.83	5.80
610	400	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	9.1	0.00	13	15500	6595	41	43
1,680	510	NATIONAL INDS.	9	0.00	2	850	459	54	54
1,100	520	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	4	2600	1041	40	41
820	530	JOR. ROCKWELL INDS.	9	0.00	2	710	379	53	51
3,000	920	NATL. CABLE WIRE. HFAC	23.8	0.00	5	1250	1235	94	99
790	530	JOR. SULPHO-CHEM	9	0.00	12	15700	8478	54	54
1,600	1,150	ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	15.2	5.88	2	450	536	2.17	1.19
1,800	810	UNIV. INDUS. INDS.	9	26	6	3500	2835	81	81
1,410	690	JOR. INDS. RESOURCES	9.8	13.70	5	2400	1752	72	73
1,100	940	JOR. NEW BLDG. CO.	16	13.70	6	1700	10413	90	89
1,900	1,290	EI - EAT READY WEAR	46.5	0.00	1	500	640	1.32	1.32
1,250	1,080	INTL. TOBACCO	6.3	0.00	3	930	1081	1.17	1.16
1,200	860	UNION CH. & VEG.	45.5	0.00	1	250	250	1.02	1.00
810	660	JORDAN STEEL	30.8	7.15	8	6250	4210	66	66
840	570	MID. EAST. COMPLEX	7.4	16.67	9	7300	4380	60	60
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 109.63 %CHG: -0.06									
GRAND TOTAL INDEX: 164.65 %CHG: -0.08									
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR MONDAY 16/02/1998									
N 1,050	960	EXPORT & FIN. BANK 75%	9	0.00	2	1100	781	96	96
800	340	JOR. TRADE FAC.	9	0.00	2	3000	1110	37	37
800	660	UNION INV. 50%	9	0.00	15	62506	12501	70	70
620	360	ARAB FIN. INVEST.	9	0.00	17	40150	17265	43	43
N 1,000	720	AL-BANAD INV. CO.	9	0.00	3	3000	27600	92	92

Pierce wins first title in France

PARIS (AFP) — Third-seed Mary Pierce, cheered on by members of her fan club perched in the upper terraces of the Coubertin Stadium, won the first title of her career in her adopted France on Sunday when she beat Dominique Van Roost of Belgium 6-3, 7-5 in the final of the \$480,000 Paris Indoor Open.

It was sweet revenge for Pierce who was jeered off the same court two years ago when she offered only token resistance and complained of a back injury while crashing at the first hurdle to Germany's Petra Begerow.

"The public here are perhaps a little difficult to understand. But for me, this time at least, they have been great. They've really helped me through this week."

The 23-year-old Canadian-born Pierce, who had beaten Van Roost in all three of their previous encounters, struggled in the later stages of the second set when she squandered a 4-1 lead.

But she remained surprisingly cool under pressure and showed no discomfort from the shoulder injury which had nearly made her walk off court after losing the first set of her quarter-final against Anke Huber.

"My shoulder has responded well to treatment," she said.

The sixth-seeded Van Roost, who wore a protective bandage on her swollen playing arm, refused to blame injury on her defeat but she was clearly feeling the effects of her tough matches earlier in the tournament and her busy start to the season.

The 24-year-old Belgian, who triumphed in Auckland and who reached the final in Hobart, needed to play eleven sets over the last five days to reach Sunday's final — seeing off Austrian Barbara Schett, Germany's Wiltrud Probst, Croatia's Iva Majoli and Nathalie Tauziat of France.

But she was clearly unhappy with the crowd.



Mary Pierce

"They were tough. French crowds are very partisan and they don't clap too much when you make a good shot against a French player. But it wasn't very nice to play in front of them. I think I deserved better," she said, adding: "It was as if I had to win everything twice out there."

Van Roost, who held serve only three times in the 1hr 46mins match, paid a warm tribute to her opponent.

"Mary has become a much more consistent player. She moves so much bet-

ter than she used to. There were times when she gave up in matches. But not any more. And she has a lot of power. She didn't make many mistakes against me today."

Pierce, who was brought up in the United States before coming to France as a 15-year-old where she was selected for France's Fed Cup team because of her mother's French nationality, was runner-up in the event to Steffi Graf in 1995. She said she hoped winning her first tournament in France

was just a first step to realising her main ambition of triumphing at Roland Garros.

"That remains my dream," she said, adding that since working with Craig Kardon, Martina Navratilova's former coach, she felt stronger physically and mentally.

She also said that she had no serious problems with her shoulder which nearly caused her to walk out after the first set of her quarter-final match against Anke Huber of Germany on Thursday.

United held by Barnsley as Gunners fire blanks

LONDON (AFP) — Manchester United's poor run of form continued when they were held to a 1-1 draw in the fifth-round of the FA Cup by Premiership basement club Barnsley at Old Trafford on Sunday.

The Premiership leaders, who have lost three of their last four league games, needed an equaliser by England striker Teddy Sheringham to stay in the competition after John Hendrie had given Danny Wilson's battlers a shock lead.

And in a frantic finale, Barnsley were denied what seemed a clear penalty when Andy Liddell was brought down in the area by substitute Gary Neville.

The two teams now face a replay at Oakwell stadium in ten days' time with a home tie against Newcastle in the quarter-finals the prize for the winners.

Meanwhile, Arsenal's hopes of reaching the last eight of the FA Cup for the first time since they last won the trophy in 1993 also suffered a setback when they were held to a 0-0 draw by Crystal Palace at Highbury.

The Premiership leaders, who have lost three of their last four league games, were once again not firing on all cylinders against the Premiership's bottom club, who were thrashed 7-0 on their last to Old Trafford.

But after 26 minutes Brian McClair almost scored when he hit a left-footed shot against the inside of the post from Giggs' header.

Barnsley goalkeeper David Watson then produced a superb save from the impressive Ronnie Johnsen following a great back-heel by Giggs.

The visitors, though, stunned Old Trafford into silence when United captain Peter Schmeichel, regarded as the best goalkeeper in the world, made a dreadful error to gift Barnsley a shock lead.

The giant Dane sliced his attempted kick clear from a back pass and John Hendrie pounced to score after 37 minutes.

Stung into action, United hit back immediately and Watson was forced clear from Ryan Giggs following Jovo Bosancic's suicidal back pass.

Then after 41 minutes Sheringham surged into the Barnsley area to slide the ball past Watson from six yards and haul United level with his 12th goal of the season.

United replaced Johnsen with David Beckham at half-time in an attempt to give them more width down the right. Giggs should have scored with a free header inside the first minute but instead he planted the ball straight into

Watson's arms.

United sliced through Barnsley's defence when Gary Pallister found Giggs, who back heeled the ball into the path of the central defender only for Chris Morgan to hack his centre away for a corner.

But spirited Barnsley, who beat Tottenham 3-1 in a replay at their Oakwell ground in the last round, resisted United's mounting pressure to keep alive their hopes of a shock triumph.

In the day's other match, Arsenal, still without injured England striker Ian Wright, failed to convert heavy second-half pressure into goals as their battling London rivals hung on for a draw.

Palace, unsettled by take-over talk and languishing in the Premiership relegation zone with a string of injuries to key players, failed to manage a single shot on goal in a dire first 45 minutes.

But the south London club had good reason to feel cheated of a goal when they were denied what England manager Glenn Hoddle described during the interval as "the most blatant penalty of the season."

Arsenal goalkeeper Alex Manninger, who is currently deputising for injured England star David Seaman, was lucky to find himself on the pitch after a tackle more often appropriate to rugby than football.

The 20-year-old Austrian brought down Jamie Fullerton with a clumsy body check on the right of the area.

Referee Martin Bodenham outraged the visiting fans when he only produced a yellow card and then indicated that the foul had taken place outside the area, though television replays showed it to be a yard inside.

But the apparent injustice was evened out 15 minutes into the second period when Arsenal were left crying foul after another highly dubious penalty decision by the referee.

Gunners' midfielder Stephen Hughes was scythed down by Jamie Smith as he burst into the left of the Palace box only for Bodenham to wave-play on.

Arsenal, unbeaten in 11 games going into the match, by now had moved up several gears and were laying siege to the Palace goalmouth but Palace rode their luck and remained firm at the back to deny the home side.

The winners of the fifth round replay at Selhurst Park in 10 days' time will face either West Ham or Blackburn at home.

Corretja wins Dubai Open

DUBAI (AFP) — Alex Corretja claimed his first ever hard court title here Sunday when he defeated fellow-Spaniard Felix Mantilla 7-6 (7/0), 6-1 to win the Dubai Open.

In doing so, he continued a remarkable record that has seen the No. 4 seed win four of the six Dubai Open finals.

The first-set was a hard-fought stamina-sapping affair and many of the baseline rallies extended to 20 strokes or more as each tried to outwit the other.

Being not only good friends but also practice partners, they knew each other backwards.

At first it was sixth-seeded Mantilla who seemed to have the edge, dropping just four points in his first four service games. But he also faced the only break-point of the set, at 4-4, which he saved with a blazing forehand down the line.

Corretja took control in the tie-break, not relinquishing a point, and he began the second set by breaking to lead 2-0.

Although Mantilla pulled back the break in the next game, he didn't win another game.

"This is hard court — this is special," said Corretja, who earned \$142,000 and a silver Dhow trophy.

"I've been working very hard for two years so I didn't win the match today — I won it in practice."

Mantilla admitted that the first set was vital. The grounds for Corretja's hard court skills were laid at the 1996 U.S. Open, when he pushed Pete Sampras to the brink of defeat and gave the world No. 1 arguably the toughest match of his career.

Agassi ends title drought with win over Sampras

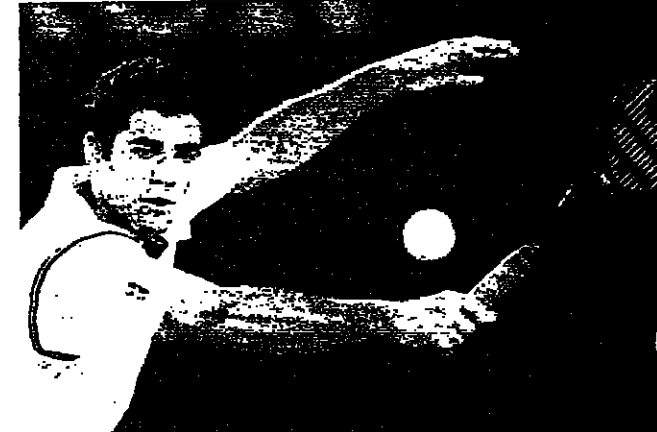
SAN JOSE (AFP) — Andre Agassi snapped a losing streak of nearly two years here Sunday with a 6-2, 6-4 victory over World No. 1 Pete Sampras in the final of the ATP Tour Sybase Open.

Agassi captured his fourth title at this event and first ATP Tour title since winning the ATP Championships in Cincinnati on August 11, 1996. He earned \$45,000 for his 35th career singles title.

For the 26-year-old Agassi, who won this event in 1990, '93 and '95, this victory over Sampras is a major boost to a career that many thought was over after a forgettable 1997. He failed to win a title last season and finished ranked 122nd in the world, the first time he finished out of the top 100 since he turned pro in 1986. He started the week ranked 71st in the world and will move into the top 50 on Monday.

"This has been a two-to-three month process," said Agassi. "I've been practicing every day for two hours and it's become a juggling act. I still haven't quite tied it all in. I feel like I need to do it on my terms. You see a lot of young guys on the tour now and I just need a few more tournaments and time will tell."

Agassi broke Sampras in the third and fifth games of the opening set, overcoming



Pete Sampras

eight aces and taking the set in 33 minutes. Agassi broke Sampras in the fifth game of the second set, taking advantage of two of Sampras' six double faults in the match. He closed out the match in 69 minutes as Sampras hit a forehand return long.

"I've been moving toward the ball better," said Agassi. "I definitely was on his serve. He was feeling my pressure."

Sampras fired 17 aces, but won just 22 per cent of points on his first serve and just 33 per cent on his second serve.

"He was picking off my serve," said Sampras. "He did a nice job of coming in, especially on my second serve. He looks real confident. He had a great week

here. It's good for the game to see him play."

Agassi won for the ninth time in 21 matches against Sampras and posted his first victory over the top-ranked player since July 30, 1995 at the DU Maurier Open in Toronto.

Sampras, the two-time defending champion, suffered his first loss in a final since falling to Germany's Boris Becker in Stuttgart, Germany in October 1996, snapping a streak of nine straight victories in finals.

The 26-year-old Sampras also lost for the second time in 10 matches this season. He was denied an 11th Grand Slam title as he lost to Karol Kucera in the quarter-finals at this year's Australian Open.



Andre Agassi

Bulls beat Pistons; Warriors end losing streak

CHICAGO (AP) — Toni Kukoc, a surprise starter after Dennis Rodman missed practice, scored 22 points and Chicago withstood the late 3-point shooting of Lindsey Hunter.

Hunter had five 3-pointers and 19 points in the fourth quarter, helping Detroit close to 74-70 and 95-90 before the Pistons lost for the 18th time in their last 19 games against the Bulls.

Hunter finished 7-for-19 on 3s and with 31 points. Brian Williams had 21 before fouling out with 3:42 left.

Michael Jordan added 21 points and had 12 rebounds while Scottie Pippen had 20 points for the Bulls.

Golden State 101, Boston 87: In Oakland, California, Donyell Marshall scored a season-high 30 points and grabbed 13 rebounds as Golden State ended its 11-game home losing streak.

The Warriors, winning for just the second time in 23 games, avoided tying their worst home losing streak set in 1965. Their previous win at home came Dec. 23 over Denver.

Marshall went 13-for-19 from the field. Joe Smith had 18 points and 10 rebounds for the Warriors.

Antoine Walker's 26 points and 12 rebounds led Boston, which was held to 37 per cent from the field.

Golden State scored 11 straight points over a six-minute span bridging the third and fourth quarters for a 79-62 with 7:25 left. Boston got no closer than 11 points the rest of the way.

Knicks 102, Cavaliers 91: In New York, Allan Houston scored 22 of his season-high 34 points in the third quarter for New York.

He came within two points of the Knicks' team record for points in a single quarter — 24 by Willis Reed in 1967 against the Los Angeles Lakers.

Houston, who has scored at least 20 points in nine straight games, eclipsed his previous highest scoring game as a Knick by two points and finished four short of his career-high set in 1996 with Detroit.

Larry Johnson added 23 points and Chris Mills had 16 for the Knicks.

Shawn Kemp had 30 points and 17 rebounds while Cedric Henderson added 23 points for the Cavs, whose backcourt starters and top reserve combined for just 11 points.

Cleveland also was out rebounded 45-38 despite the absence of New York's Charles Oakley, who served a one-game suspension for six flagrant foul points.

Kings 88, Wizards 86: In Sacramento, California, Mitch Richmond's jumper with 91 seconds left lifted Sacramento over Washington.

The Wizards, playing without injured forwards Chris Webber and Juwan Howard, missed several opportunities to tie it or win it in the closing minute, including on an inbounds play with two-tenths of a second left. A lob pass was knocked out of bounds by the

Kings as the game ended.

Corliss Williamson scored 24 points and Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf had 10 as the Kings won their third straight game and 10th in 12 tries at home.

Tracy Murray scored 29 points and Strickland had 20 points and 10 assists for Washington, which trailed by 14 points in the third quarter.

Trail Blazers 117, Nuggets 82: In Portland, Oregon, Isaiah Rider scored 31 points to lead short-handed Portland, which played without new additions Damon Stoudamire, Walt Williams and Carlos Rogers.

The six-player trade with the Toronto Raptors was being held up until results of the physical exams taken by Alvin Williams and Gary Trent were received by the Raptors.

Rider scored eight points in each of the first three quarters, and added seven more in the fourth. He also had seven assists and five rebounds.

Portland's Jermaine O'Neal had a career-high 21 points and nine rebounds in his first NBA start. Rasheed Wallace added 14 points.

The Nuggets were led by Johnny Newman's 21 points, while Laphonso Ellis scored 13 and Anthony Goldwire 12.

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senal, still without injury, to convert heavy second battling London rival-hunt

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Sports

Five-goal Inter cannot shake Juventus

PARIS (AFP) — Juventus beat Sampdoria 3-0 to stay four points clear at the top of the Italian Serie A Sunday night despite a five-goal victory by rivals Inter Milan over Lecce with Ronaldo inspiring his team with a hat-trick.

And Real Madrid edged one point clear of bitter rivals Barcelona in the race for the Spanish title thanks to a no-nonsense 3-0 home victory over struggling Sporting Gijon. Barcelona, who have a game in hand, shared a 0-0 home draw with Majorca.

There was no change at the top in France with the 'triple M' pacemakers — Marseille, Metz and Monaco — all scoring impressive wins. But Paris St Germain plunged deeper into crisis when they crashed 1-0 at home to Nantes — their third consecutive home loss and a result which put manager Ricardo's job on the line.

Kaiserslautern's chances of becoming the first newly-promoted club to win the Bundesliga increased when they beat Stuttgart 1-0 and rivals Bayern Munich slipped to a 2-1 defeat at Hertha Berlin. Bayern's defeat was their first in the German capital's Olympic stadium for 20 years and it left them five points adrift of the leaders.

Juventus scored twice and both sides had a man sent off in a fiercely-fought first-half at the Delle Alpi stadium in Turin.

Lazio's fine run continued with a 2-0 victory at mid-table Bari. Vladimir Jugovic converted a 10th-minute penalty and Roberto Rambaudi sealed the win in the 90th minute to keep his side third in the table, three points behind Inter.

Udinese stayed fourth after coming back for a 1-1 draw with 10-man Parma. AS Roma beat Bologna 2-1 at the Olympic stadium, with Marco Delvecchio heading a late winner from point-blank range.

AC Milan were 4-1 winners at Vicenza after two goals from Patrick Kluivert, the disappointing Dutch striker who has spent most of the season being booed and whistled by his own fans.

The Tuscan derby between Fiorentina and Empoli ended 1-1, while in the two relegation battles, bottom club Napoli lost 1-0 to Atalanta and Piacenza, drew 0-0 with Brescia.

In other matches Athletic Bilbao crashed to a shock 3-0 home defeat against Valencia.

French pacemakers Marseille came away 4-0 winners from Toulouse, thanks to goals from Dugarry (22), Roy (78), Gravelaine (79) and Ravanello (85).



Belarusian freestyle skier Dmitri Dashchinsky is upside down as he performs a flip during the aerial elimination round of the men's Olympic freestyle skiing event in Izuzna Kogen February 16. Dashchinsky finished in first place ahead of the final on February 18 (Reuters photo)



German tennis player and former World No. 1 Steffi Graf smiles during a morning training session in Hanover February 16. Graf was to play later in the day in a tournament of the Women's Tennis Association (WTA) in Hanover, her first tournament after an eight month injury break (Reuters photo)

Nagano Games Maier, Seizinger finally come through to win gold

NAGANO (AP) — Favourites Hermann Maier and Katja Seizinger finally came through with Olympic gold Monday.

The Austrian daredevil put a horrifying crash behind him to win the Super-G, and the German star overcame a bout of self-doubt to take the women's downhill, as Alpine skiers finally got a full day of racing after a week of weather delays.

Seizinger, 25, became the first skier to win consecutive Olympic downhill, then went chasing a second Olympic title later Monday by winning the opening downhill of the women's combined.

Larissa Lazutina of Russia had a third gold round her neck when the Russian cross-country relay team beat Norway and Italy. Together with a silver, Lazutina was the most decorated athlete of the games so far with four medals. Russia has captured all four women's events so far.

Marianne Timmer won the seventh Dutch speed skating medal, setting a world record in the 1,500 metres. Gunda Niemann-Stirnemann of Germany, a 3,000-metre specialist, won the silver and Chris Witty took the bronze, the first U.S. speed skating medal of these games.

Together with Seizinger's win, Niemann-Stirnemann's silver gave Germany the lead in the overall medal standings with 18, including six gold. Norway was close behind with 16, and five gold. Russia was joint third with Austria at 11 medals, but Russia has the most gold medals with 7.

Canada has nine, but its ice hockey players showed medal potential by whipping the archrival United States 4-1.

Maier forced his bruised and battered body into the tuck and never looked back, winning the Super-G by a big margin, finally living up to his nickname, "das monster."

The 25-year-old former bricklayer still has the giant slalom left to make it a double-gold games, half of the initial target his fans had set, but the downhill disaster Friday, when he was lucky to survive a spectacular spill with all bones intact, also ended his challenge in the combined event.

"After a big crash, it's hard for the brain, hard to concen-



Hermann Maier of Austria holds the gold medal he won the Alpine skiing Olympic super-G event after the victory ceremony February 16 (Reuters photo)

trate," he said. "I needed the first gates to get in my rhythm," he did, leaving fellow Austrian Hans Knauss and Swiss Didier Cuche to

appointment of the Super-G last week, when the gold-medal favourite finished outside of the medals, to win the women's premier event, the



Canada's Elvis Stojko wipes a tear from his eye during a news conference in Nagano February 16. Stojko injured an adductor muscle during his performance in the men's figure skating final on February 14 won by Russia's Ilya Kulik (Reuters photo)

share silvers with times .61 behind, no bronze was awarded.

"I thank my doctors and my trainers," said Maier, who also suffered a strained knee in the downhill crash.

Seizinger overcame the dis-

Nagano medals table

	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
Russia	8	4	1	13
Germany	6	6	6	18
Norway	5	7	4	16
Canada	4	4	1	9
Netherlands	3	3	1	7
Japan	3	1	3	7
Austria	2	3	6	11
Finland	2	3	2	7
United States	2	1	4	7
Switzerland	2	1	1	4
France	2	0	3	5
Italy	1	3	2	6
Bulgaria	1	0	0	1
C. Republic	0	1	1	2
Sweden	0	1	1	2
Denmark	0	1	0	1
Ukraine	0	1	0	1
Belarus	0	0	1	1
Belgium	0	0	1	1
Kazakhstan	0	0	1	1
Total	41	40	39	120

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♥ Q
♦ K 10 9 8
♣ Q 8 3

WEST
♠ Q 5 4 2
♥ 10 9 8 7 4
♦ Q 3 2
♣ A 2

EAST
♠ 10 3
♥ K 6 5 3 2
♦ Q 5 4
♣ K J 9

SOUTH
♠ A J
♥ A J
♦ A J 7
♣ A 10 7 6 5 4

The bidding:
SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
1♣ Pass 1♣ Pass
2NT Pass 3♣ Pass
3NT Pass 4♣ Pass

Opening lead: Ten of ♠

With 29 points in the combined holding, three no trump should be an easy contract for North-South. But though the majority of pairs in a local event reached that spot via an auction such as the one shown, few manage to get home.

The South hand is a nasty one to bid — powerful hands with weak ace-card suits usually are. The auction shown meets with our

approval.

West led the top card from a sequence, covered by the queen and king and taken with the ace. Most declarers took advantage of being in the closed hand to lead the ace of clubs and another, as the cards lie, that proved fatal. East won and returned a heart, and declarer then took the percentage play of finessing West for the queen of diamonds. That is correct because it allows declarer to bring in the suit even if the queen is three guarded. Down two.

Much better is to combine chances in the three long suits. Declarer should start by cashing the ace of clubs. When no honor appears, South cashes the ace of spades and overtakes the jack with the king. If either the queen or the ten drops, declarer sets up the suit by forcing out the missing honor and gets home with four spades, two hearts, two diamonds and a club.

If neither spade honor appears, declarer should lead a third round of the suit in case it breaks evenly, in which case the same nine tricks are there. (An alternate line is to play for clubs being 2-2. If that fails, declarer must then fall back to taking the percentage play in diamonds.)

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Israeli army demolishes W. Bank bedouin camp

MAALEH ADUMIM (AFP) — The Israeli army demolished a bedouin camp in the West Bank Monday some five kilometres from a Jewish settlement at Maaleh Adumim, but no reason was given for the move.

Three dozen tents and shacks belonging to members of the Jahalin tribe were knocked down by bulldozers, witnesses said. Soldiers and border guards first surrounded the camp while civilian work-

ers sifted through residents' belongings and piled them into trucks for relocation to an unknown destination, the witnesses said.

Israeli authorities said the bedouin had ignored orders to evacuate the camp but did not immediately say why they were being relocated.

Faisal Hussein, the Palestinian official in charge of Jerusalem affairs, tried to visit the site but was prevented by soldiers.

"This is tragic," Mr. Hussein later told reporters. "What the Israeli government did is not acceptable at all."

"How can they say they want peace if they do this?" Mr. Hussein said.

The Israeli army has destroyed dozens of homes of the Jahalin tribe to make room for the expansion of the Maaleh Adumim settlement, which has 20,000 residents.

Japanese and Canadian officials to visit Algeria

ALGIERS (AFP) — Canadian and Japanese parliamentary delegations are to head to Algeria later this month, the Algerian foreign ministry said Monday, in a sign of mounting international concern over massacres in the country.

The Japanese delegation is to visit Algeria from Friday to Sunday this week while the Canadian delegation will arrive on Feb. 28 for a four-day mission, ministry spokesman Abdulaziz Sebaa said.

"The MPs will look at changes to the advancing democratic process, economic reforms and the fight against terrorism," he said.

An unprecedented series of massacres since the beginning of the year caused the European Union to break its hands-off policy on Algeria and send two missions to the country — one Jan. 19 and 20, the other Feb. 8 to 12.

But both of those missions foundered against the Algerian government's refusal to allow what it considers would be foreign "interference" in its fight against Islamists.

Probes to ascertain who is behind the massacres are categorically ruled out by the government, which attributes all killings to "terrorists" — its term for the extremists.

However certain media

reports, notably in Britain, have suggested that Algerian security forces may have had a hand in some attacks.

According to U.S. State Department figures, 75,000 people have been killed since 1992 when an Islamist insurgency was sparked by the military's annulment of elections the now outlawed Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was poised to win.

The Algerian government disputes the number, saying 26,568 have been killed, including 32 killed Saturday.

More than 1,500 people have reported to have been killed since the beginning of this year.

Judge: German condemned to death in Iran must prove he is Muslim

TEHRAN (AP) — A German businessman condemned to death for sex with an Iranian woman can have the verdict overturned by proving he converted to Islam before starting the relationship, Iran's top judge said Monday.

But Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi suggested Helmut Hofer claimed to be a Muslim simply to escape punishment.

"Claiming to be a Muslim is not enough. He has to present proof of his conversion," Ayatollah Yazdi told reporters.

"If his conversion was before he started the relationship then he does not face execution under Islamic law. Otherwise, he faces serious punishment," Ayatollah Yazdi said.

Hofer, 54, was sentenced to death last month for having sex with Vahideh Qassemi, a 26-year-old medical student he met during a business trip in September. He appealed the verdict, claiming he had converted to Islam several

years ago.

Hofer was charged with "Zenaye Mohsene," or sex with a married woman or between a Muslim woman and a non-Muslim man.

The punishment for "Zenaye Mohsene" is death. However, for sexual relations out of wedlock, it is lashings. Commenting on another case, Ayatollah Yazdi said that a leading Iranian journalist, also facing a death sentence had just one supreme court appeal remaining. The high court already has upheld his sentence once.

Previous reports have said Morteza Firoozi, former editor of the English-language Iran News, was condemned to death for espionage. But Ayatollah Yazdi said Monday that Firoozi, 40, was sentenced for spying and several sexual offences. He has been jailed since May.

"The accusations against him are spying, adultery and repeated sexual offences, some of which are extremely

serious," Ayatollah Yazdi said, without elaborating. "He has confessed to the crimes."

In instances of adultery, death is by stoning.

The headline Quds daily reported Monday that Firoozi had confessed to spying for France, Japan and South Korea. It said he had received \$175,000 for providing "political, economic and military information."

Other newspaper reports previously have said he was accused of spying for the United States.

Ayatollah Yazdi said that unlike Firoozi, Hofer's appeal was only the first stage of legal appeals. He said Hofer was in good health and was being visited weekly by his lawyer and German embassy officials.

Sources close to the case have said that Hofer had told Iranian authorities he is ready to marry Ms. Qassemi, the woman with whom he was allegedly involved.

Britain warns its citizens in Middle East to show caution

BEIRUT (R) — The British embassy in Lebanon issued a Foreign Office warning on Monday that any of its nationals travelling in the Middle East should show caution because of the Gulf crisis.

"This is no specific threat of violence to British nationals living or travelling in the Middle East arising from the present crisis," said the statement.

"But in the light of increased tension in the region, and of the possible threat to British interests as a result, British nationals residing or travelling there should exercise a higher degree of caution."

"We cannot discount the possibility of random acts of violence," it said of the region.

The statement advised British nationals to follow

any travel recommendations from British missions, and said any travel to Iraq would be "foolhardy in the extreme."

Britain has provided stronger verbal and military support for the United States in its current confrontation with Iraq over U.N. weapons inspections than any other country.



TRANSPORT IN BANGLADESH: An overcrowded train ferries back home tens of thousands of Muslim devotees from this suburban Tongi township Monday at the end of Biswa Ijtima, the World Muslim Congregation. Some two million Muslims from several countries participated in this year's annual event, the second biggest Muslim gathering after the Hajj in Mecca (AFP photo)

Clerides to make reunification of Cyprus goal of second term

NICOSIA (AFP) — Cypriot President Glafcos Clerides, who secured reelection in a tightly fought contest Sunday, immediately made reunification of the divided island the principal goal of his second term of office.

"The election is over and we will now all together fight for a solution of our problem," Mr. Clerides told thousands of supporters in a late-night victory speech at the capital's Eleftheria (Freedom) Stadium.

The veteran right-winger polled 50.8 per cent of the vote against 49.2 per cent for independent challenger George Iacovou, a 59-year-old former foreign minister who was

backed by the powerful communist party AKEL and the centre-right DIKO Party.

Mr. Clerides, 78, had focused his campaign almost entirely on portraying himself as the only man capable of bringing about the reunification of Cyprus, which has been divided since Turkish troops invaded in 1974 in response to a coup in Nicosia aimed at uniting the island with Greece.

The veteran negotiator had represented Greek Cypriots in most key international talks since the negotiations for independence from Britain in the late 1950s and his reelection was seen by many diplomats as crucial for a settlement on

the island.

United Nations mediators had put talks between the island's divided Greek and Turkish communities on hold until mid-March pending the outcome of the poll.

Mr. Clerides is "the only person, the last person indeed, who is capable of reaching an agreement and getting it accepted by his community," said an international mediator who requested anonymity.

Mr. Clerides himself says he is better equipped to negotiate with Turkish Cypriot leaders "because in all the talks I have wanted to take into account the problems of the other side."

The Turkish Cypriots are

afraid that the Greek Cypriot majority will one day overrun the island and attach it to Greece making them third class citizens," he told AFP.

"The Greek Cypriots believe that Turkey is using the Turkish Cypriots as a pretext to occupy one part of Cyprus and in a further step the whole island."

"Whether they are justified or not, these fears and anxieties exist and we have to address them."

The Turkish Cypriots, who took no part in the presidential polls, declared a breakaway state in the north in 1983 which is recognised only by Turkey.

Tripoli envoy invites Pope to visit Libya

VATICAN CITY (R) — Libya's first envoy to the Vatican invited Pope John Paul II Monday to make his first visit to the Arab Nation that the United States and other countries have tried to isolate.

Hussein Fuad Mustafa Kabazi said he hoped that "one day Your Holiness will deign to visit" Libya.

The new envoy made the invitation in his written speech at a credentials presentation ceremony at the Vatican.

The Vatican established full diplomatic ties with Libya last March, a move that put it at odds with the United States and other countries which have tried to isolate Libyan leader Colonel Muammar Qadhafi.

The new envoy told the Pope that Col. Qadhafi admired him.

Col. Qadhafi said in an interview published in Italy's La Repubblica newspaper this month he would like to meet the Pope.

Last March, the United States criticised the Vatican for establishing diplomatic relations with Libya, which Washington accuses of sponsoring "state terrorism."

Israeli, U.S. planners considering plans to kill Saddam — report

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israel's military, which first drew up plans to kill President Saddam Hussein in 1991, is again considering proposals to assassinate the Iraqi leader, this time with a precision bombing raid, the Jerusalem Report magazine said Monday.

The United States is also looking at contingency plans for assassinating President Hussein, the report said.

Washington is weighing two options according to the magazine. One would be a direct air attack using precision bombs, along the lines of the Israeli plan, and the second

would involve the attempt to engineer a military coup by encouraging dissidents in Baghdad.

The report said that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and opposition leader Ehud Barak, a former armed forces chief of staff, agreed recently that the best way to protect Israel from non-conventional Iraqi weapons in the future was to kill President Hussein.

In the spring of 1991, just after the end of the Gulf war, Mr. Barak, acting at the behest of then-Defence Minister Moshe Arens, had devised a

plan to assassinate President Hussein since the Americans had failed to oust the Iraq leader during the war.

The plan involved sending Israeli ground troops armed with short-range missiles to western Iraq where President Hussein was known to visit. However, the project was put on hold when the elite Sayeret Matkal commando which was to carry out the assassination had a training accident that led to the deaths of five soldiers.

Mr. Barak at one time in his career commanded the commando unit and Mr. Netanyahu also served in it.

U.S. forces hold live-fire exercises in Kuwait

UDAIRI RANGE (AFP) — Some 150 U.S. troops staged live-fire exercises in the Kuwaiti desert here on Monday, against the background of the Iraq crisis.

"If the man from up north wants to come here, we've got something for him," warned U.S. Private Scott Reynolds, a gunner from northern California, referring to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

Four M1A1 Abrams tanks and three M106 mortars fired several rounds at targets shaped like tanks and personnel carriers in the Udairi range,

some 70 kilometre from the border with Iraq.

U.S. Sergeant Michael Smith, 37, who arrived in Kuwait on Jan. 10, said: "This is a small demonstration of what we can do" if the emirate comes under attack.

The exercises, being held at platoon level, are part of "Intrinsic Action" manoeuvres launched in early January and due to run four months, U.S. Lieutenant Chris Merriam from Florida told journalists.

"As of now, we are just doing what we have regularly planned," he said, adding that

no Kuwaiti troops were involved in Monday's exercises.

U.S. forces regularly hold exercises in Kuwait as part of a defence pact which the two countries signed after the 1991 Gulf war when Iraqi occupation troops were expelled from the oil-rich emirate.

Around 1,500 U.S. troops are taking part in the Intrinsic Action manoeuvres, while several hundred more are based in Kuwait to maintain pre-positioned military hardware.

Clinton administration sets stage for military strikes against Iraq

WASHINGTON (AP) — Top Clinton administration officials say they see no answer to the diplomatic impasse with Iraq and are prepared to go to the nation to explain why a military strike may be necessary and unavoidable.

U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen said Sunday that the United States will accept no compromise that allows Iraq to limit U.N. weapons inspections. "I have seen no proposal that would satisfy the basic objectives — that is full, unrestricted access," he said on ABC Television's "This Week."

U.N. representatives are in Baghdad and the Iraqi government has sought to defuse the crisis by offering some access to the presidential compounds it previ-

ously declared off-limits.

The issue, chief U.N. weapons inspector Richard Butler said on Cable News Network's "Late Edition," is whether there can be about eight palaces that "will be inspected in a special way. That doesn't mean an ineffective inspection, but a special way that shows sensitivity to Iraq and if a solution on that basis is agreeable to the [Security] Council, maybe we've got a diplomatic solution. If not, I don't know what will happen."

U.S. President Bill Clinton's national security adviser, Sandy Berger, said he hoped the dispute could be settled peacefully, but not if it meant concessions to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

"We simply cannot let this

man, who has used chemical weapons 10 times since 1983, have safe havens to redevelop his weapons of mass destruction," Mr. Berger said on NBC Television's "Meet The Press."

The U.S. administration says a military strike could come at any time, although it would still like to get more open support from U.S. allies and has yet to get a formal endorsement from the U.S. Congress, which is in recess this week.

To raise national consciousness on the issue, Mr. Clinton will go to the Pentagon on Tuesday, Mr. Cohen said. Mr. Berger and U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright will hold a town-hall meeting in Columbus, Ohio, on Wednesday.

Senator Joseph Biden, a Delaware Democrat, said the United States has been promised logistical support for a military strike from at least 23 nations, compared with 37 backers during the 1991 Gulf war. But Russia, China and France remain opposed to the military option, and Mr. Clinton continued his telephone campaign Sunday, calling leaders in Austria, Belgium, Bahrain and Kuwait to coordinate policy.

Administration officials made frequent trips to Congress last week to garner support. Mr. Cohen said he was satisfied that "ultimately Congress is going to be very supportive. And I think there's a strong majority for action right now."

But neither the U.S. House of Representatives nor the U.S. Senate have been able to come up with language for a resolution supporting military action in Iraq that would be acceptable both to lawmakers who think the administration is going too far and those who feel it's not doing enough.

Sen. John McCain, an Arizona Republican, urged Mr. Clinton to announce a deadline for military action. If the United States does not stop President Hussein, "then we will face a problem of the gravity that we haven't experienced probably in the history of our country," he said on "Fox News Sunday."

Sen. John Warner, a Virginia Republican, and Sen. Carl Levin, a Michigan Democrat, who

accompanied Mr. Cohen last week on a trip to the Middle East and Russia in search of support for U.S. military action, also said Congress would back the president. "The bottom line is, what is the alternative?" Mr. Warner said on CBS Television's "Face The Nation."

But others said Mr. Clinton has yet to make his case.

"The president has not yet addressed the American people," Sen. Arlen Specter, a Pennsylvania Republican, said on Fox. There should be no military strike before Congress gives its approval, he said, and "America is not psychologically ready for an attack on Iraq."

"We need to know — if we're going to use this type of military

strength and put our people at risk and clearly kill a lot of civilians, potentially in Iraq and potentially put Israel at risk — what is the purpose?" Judd Gregg, a new Hampshire Republican, added on CNN.

Sen. Gregg and others also complained that the stated U.S. mission — to diminish President Hussein's ability to build weapons of mass destruction and threaten Iraq's neighbours, did not go far enough.

"As a practical matter, an attack on him in which he survives and maintains his biological capabilities will probably increase his stature in the Arab world and make a person who has been a pariah up until now maybe a martyr," Sen. Gregg said.

De Klerk is to divorce his wife

JOHANNESBURG (AFP)

— South Africa's first apartheid president, F.W. de Klerk, is to divorce his wife of nearly 39 years after admitting to an affair with the wealthy wife of a Greek shipping tycoon, reports said Sunday. De Klerk's statement did not say whether he planned to pursue his sweetheart, Eliza Georgiades, with whom he has been having an affair for several years. The two lovers have previously admitted to attempting to end the affair — they did not see each other for two years — but their love pulled them together again.

Scorsese to present Oscars

BEVERLY HILLS (AFP)

Director Martin Scorsese will be one of the celebrities handing out the coveted Oscar statuettes during the upcoming 70th Academy Awards event on March 23, officials from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences announced. Scorsese will be joined by actresses Juliette Binoche, Geena Davis, Frances McDormand, and Madonna, as well as actors Denzel Washington, Cuba Gooding Jr. and Geoffrey Rush in handing out the awards, officials said.

Bardot wants private burial — with her dogs

PARIS (AFP)

— There will be no public pilgrimages to the French Riviera's Saint-Tropez cemetery to visit the grave of Brigitte Bardot when she dies. The French film star turned animal rights campaigner wants to be buried at home — with her dogs. "I would like to be laid to rest at home, among my dogs, in my garden facing the sea, and not in the Saint-Tropez cemetery. I have never liked crowds," the 63-year-old said in an interview published in the weekly Paris-Match.

Newman to play Costner's father

LOS ANGELES (AFP)

— Paul Newman will be Kevin Costner's father in an upcoming romantic drama titled "Message in a Bottle," directed by Mexican Luis Mandoki. The Daily Variety trade paper reported. Newman, 73, is currently starring in the mystery drama "Twilight" along with Susan Sarandon and fellow film veteran Gene Hackman.

Switzerland goes to pot

BERNE (AFP)

— Some 20 per cent of all Swiss have tried marijuana at least once in their lives, according to a survey published by the weekly Sonntagsblick. The figure was higher among young people, with 39 per cent of those under the age of 34 admitting to having experimented with soft drugs. Altogether, 49 per cent of respondents declared themselves in favour of legalising cannabis consumption, said the newspaper, which also published a list of 100 Swiss celebrities who admitted having smoked the drug.

Bar owner pleads not guilty in smoking case

AUBURN (R)

— Call it a case of a smoking butt. A 70-year-old bar owner pleaded not guilty to charges that he violated a tough new California law banning smoking in the state's 35,000 taverns and casinos. In what legal observers said was the first major challenge to the state ban, Bill Ostrander said he would fight charges that he allowed patrons to smoke in his bar. Ostrander, who owns the Almond Tree lounge in Roseville, said he should not be held accountable for what his customers did in his bar.